

**FREE
TAKE ONE**

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Maximize value of yard and garden improvements

Douglas Freer

Now is a good time to look at your yard and garden and make plans for the upcoming season. Home or yard improvement projects often feel overwhelming, if you're unfamiliar with the work involved. Even avid do-it-yourselfers find occasion to call on the expertise of a professional contractor to help them through certain aspects of a challenging project.

To maximize the value of your investment in a landscape project, consider both the order of operations to be performed as well as operations that can be combined. For example, if you are installing a patio, it might be the right time to consider adding a tie-in or connection for future drain tile.

Taking advantage of the heavy equipment on-site for the patio will decrease costs for the drainage later on. Also, if the future drainage work will require pulling up a section of the new patio, installing a tie-in beyond the patio will avoid disruption of the patio and additional restoration costs later.

Regardless of the size of the project, consider these money-saving steps:

- Prepare a budget. This will help establish your priorities, set realistic limits and keep the project focused.
- Determine whether there are projects that you can combine and complete at the same time.
- Determine if the project can be broken into several phases. Understand how the project will be left and make a plan for returning to it so you are not left living in a construction zone.
- Plan in advance to eliminate waste.

The following order of operations may not be appropriate for all jobs, but it shows a complete start-to-finish for a major yard and garden overhaul. Projects vary, requiring more or fewer steps, depending on the scope of work.



After: Backyard seating was created using sandstone already on site. Recycling existing materials is one practical way to keep landscape renovation costs down.

1. Remove existing undesirable elements.
2. Excavate the site.
3. Perform rough grading for major changes.
4. Repair or install drainage.
5. Install base/footer.
6. Install infrastructure, such as plumbing and electrical.
7. Install hardscaping, such as patio, retaining walls and structures.
8. Perform grading to establish lawn and bed areas.
9. Install low-voltage lighting and irrigation systems.
10. Prepare/install planting beds and plants.
11. Install lawn/yard.

Whether working with a professional to design and plan out your project or



Before

going it alone, energy and effort invested during the planning stage of your project will help to keep you on target and on budget.

Douglas Freer is a Cleveland Heights native and the owner of Lawn Lad, Inc., which provides residential landscape services in the Heights area. Call 216-371-1935 or visit www.lawnlad.com