

Business First Article

BizTrends: Lawn and Landscape

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Image is everything. This cliché definitely applies to the world of business, where first impressions are often lasting. The difference between dressing professionally, having an attractive office and an appealing presentation is often the difference in getting the job. Clients feel comfortable using a company that looks professional and put together in all areas. The landscape and exterior of one's office is a critical part of this image.

In today's competitive market place businesses now realize that it is extremely important to have a good exterior appearance. Businesses, just as homeowners, are spending more and more on the appearance of their offices inside and out. Landscape used to be an afterthought: you know, just throw some bushes in the ground. But now, businesses are doing elaborate landscapes, even gardens, to not only impress future or present clients, but to add beauty to the workspace for the employees.

Choose a Professional

Business owners can do themselves a favor by choosing a reputable professional for this job. Someone is needed who would look at your needs and help with the layout and design of the property with those needs in mind.

Look for a firm with a good reputation and ask to see examples of their work if you are not familiar with it. Companies that employ degreed horticulturists, landscape architects and/or garden designers should be sought out. Just as you wouldn't trust your home or office building to just anybody, do the same with your landscape.

Update your look

Many business owners are starting to realize the benefits of updating the look of their existing location or going the extra mile when opening a new office. It maybe time to rip out the old yews (Taxus) that are eating the front of the office and try something exciting.

A professional designer can help you with a look that is suitable for your business and within your budget. You don't have to break the bank to get a great look, but it is especially true in landscaping that you get what you pay for. Doing it right the first time will prevent your having to go back and pay for fixing something that you did on the cheap the first time around.

There are many gorgeous plants on the market that are good performers and are low maintenance. Being a busy business owner means that time is precious and you want to be sure to choose plants that require little care and have year round interest.

Design for four seasons

Even though everyone wants it, there are no plants that bloom all year. However, with a well thought out design, you can have a great looking landscape with interest and beauty year round. By not relying solely on flowers, and looking at things like texture, leaf color, bark, berries, fall color, winter color etc., you can have a lasting look.

Examples of trees with year round interest include Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus*), River Birch (*Betula nigra*), Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus parviflora*), and Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*). Textural plants such as the ornamental grasses are attractive year round and are very low maintenance. Evergreens are always a critical part of the landscape and foundation shrubs such as holly, boxwood, and laurel will add substance to the landscape.

New and/or improved plants are released every year to the marketplace. The 'Knockout' series of roses have been a phenomenal success and prove to be a winner every time. These shrub roses bloom from spring to frost and don't have the disease and pest problems that afflict traditional roses.

There is also a re-blooming hydrangea named 'Endless Summer' available. It blooms nonstop from spring to frost as well. Depending on your soil type, these pink or blue blooms well add a dramatic impact.

Don't forget the Hardscape

Hardscape is a term that designers use when they are talking about any structure or hard surfaces in the landscape. Examples would be patios, decks, ponds and waterfalls, walls, arbors, pergolas, gazebos, etc. These are key features that add much visual appeal to a site and make more usable space for people to be in. These spaces become gathering areas where clients and/ or employees can have meetings and breaks.

Final Thoughts

In our modern, fast-paced business world it is ever more important that we soften our technological surroundings with nature for both stress relief and inspiration. The time and money spent in properly planning your landscape will pay off generously over the years for your clients, your employees and you.