



Staying Cool in The Garden Through a Warm July

This July has been a hot one for Chicago, with an especially hot and stormy start to the month! We hope that everyone was still able to have a fun and safe Fourth of July weekend, despite the harsh weather.

In the early stages of planning your project? You're in for a treat! This edition of Nature's Notes features the first of a two-part series on how landscape projects are priced. Part one focuses on pricing for plants and hardscape materials. This month's project spotlight shows greenscapes and hardscapes in action with a full backyard transformation.

Need a helping hand with landscaping services?

Call us at [847-475-7917](tel:847-475-7917) or submit an inquiry through our online [contact form](#) to get started.



Behind the Scenes: How are Landscape Materials Priced?

Landscape projects are significant investments, but the prices can sometimes seem arbitrary or excessive to the unfamiliar. The truth is, there is a lot more to estimating than meets the eye. In this two-part series, we'll explore some of the main factors that can affect how much your landscape project will cost.

Choosing the right materials for a project can be tricky, which is why it's best to enlist the help of a landscape designer. Aside from style preferences, the choice of materials is influenced by the site, the scope of the project, the timeline, and the level of maintenance. Landscape project materials can be roughly divided into two categories: plants and hardscapes.



Hardscapes

Hardscape material can drastically alter the pricing of a project, depending on the level of craftsmanship needed for the material or other factors such as utilities and drainage.

Gravel: This is the most cost-effective material and the shortest-lived. Uses include pathways, plant beds, driveways, and patios.

Stepstones: Prices vary by material (concrete or natural stone). Uses include pathways and patios.

Concrete: Refers to concrete pavers or blocks (not poured concrete). Although concrete products are very durable, their color will gradually fade over time. Uses include pathways, patios, driveways, walls, steps/stoops, etc.

Clay: Pavers and bricks made from clay have a relatively long lifespan, are very durable, and retain their color indefinitely. Used for pathways, patios, driveways, walls, steps/stoops, etc.

Natural Stone: While the most expensive material, natural stone has the longest lifespan and offers a timeless look. Not suitable for driveways as it tends to crack under a lot of weight. Used for pathways, patios, walls, steps/stoops, outcroppings, etc.

Local materials (Bluestone, Eden Limestone, etc.) tend to be a lot less costly than imported materials (Jerusalem Limestone, Travertine, etc.)

Some stylistic choices do affect hardscape pricing. For example, a curved pathway will require more material than a straight pathway with the same square footage. Installation crews have to cut each edge paver on-site, which requires more time and creates more scraps.



Plants

Every plant is a little different, and there is a lot of variation in how much attention they need. Heartier plants typically carry the most upfront costs.

Annuals: These plants only last for one growing season and are often swapped out more frequently (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter). They are typically the cheapest of the plant categories, but this repeated cycle of removal and installation can be costly over time.

Perennials: Perennials are herbaceous plants that return year after year, offering a wide variety of colors, sizes, and forms. It's often said that perennials "sleep" the first year, "creep" the second year, and "leap" the third year as they become established and reach their full potential.

Shrubs: Shrubs are typically heartier than perennials but often slower-growing. Most shrubs are much larger than perennials, so fewer are

needed to fill a space.

Trees: Trees are by far the most expensive plant category, owing to their large size and the difficulty of transporting them. Most trees are extremely hardy and typically require the least maintenance.

When it comes to plants, size does matter! You can easily cut costs on plant materials by going with plugs, trays, or pints, but they will take much longer to grow and have a much lower chance of surviving. When you buy a larger plant, you're paying for the years, resources, and expertise spent growing it.

Some plant varieties are used more commonly than others, making them less expensive. Requesting specific and uncommon varieties can sometimes increase the price.

Our deep dive into landscape pricing continues in next month's edition of Nature's Notes, where we'll discuss how site factors and project construction will work into project pricing.

Have a question about project pricing?

Give us a call!

847-475-7917



Project Spotlight:

Reclaiming Privacy and Pleasure

Our clients were renovating the exterior of their charming 1894 Victorian home on a corner lot in the historic district of Evanston. They wanted to reclaim their private outdoor space: a long, narrow, sloped side yard with a worn, three-terraced patio that was difficult to access. Since there was no door from the main floor, reaching the space required walking around the house, leaving the yard largely unused.

Although they envisioned adding a new rear door, deck, and stairs, they had been told the project would be too challenging. They also wanted to create greater privacy, as their front porch faced a busy intersection and pedestrians frequently crossed the front lawn on their way to nearby schools.



The three-terraced patio was composed of oddly shaped limestone and concrete materials and was exposed.

The design centered around transforming the underutilized side yard into a functional outdoor living space. A spacious deck now extends from the new rear entrance, providing room for grilling and seating, while branching stairways lead to separate dining and lounging areas as well as a discreet utility space for two large air conditioning units, trash receptacles, and recycling bins.

The outdated three-tiered patio of irregular limestone and concrete was replaced with elegant Aberdeen slabs by Techo-Bloc, creating a cohesive and inviting outdoor setting. A cedar privacy fence encloses the rejuvenated side yard, offering seclusion without making the space feel confined.



The narrow backyard also lacked privacy, and the old asphalt driveway had a deep pit which had to be corrected.

Working within the city's historic district presented additional challenges. Strict preservation guidelines required the use of permeable paving materials, and special care was taken throughout construction to protect the home's original siding, which could not be replaced.

The narrow backyard was further improved by correcting a deep depression in the old asphalt driveway and replacing it with poured concrete accented by clay paver edging. A perennial planting bed in the parkway, also bordered with clay pavers, enhances the home's curb appeal while complementing the historic character of the property. To address the home's prominent corner location, the front landscape was redesigned to provide privacy without obstructing views. A low hedge of Peking Cotoneaster gently defines the front yard, while a Serbian Spruce adds year-round screening.

The project was completed with a new front entrance featuring two mortared brick pillars and an Ashlar-pattern, full-range Bluestone walkway. Together with the home's updated exterior paint palette, these improvements created a cohesive renovation that restored privacy, improved functionality, and gave the homeowners an outdoor living space they can enjoy for years to come.



Looking for Inspiration?

Check out our [Work Portfolio](#) and take a look at our transformations [here](#).



Have a Comment or Question?

Interested in learning more about landscape maintenance services with Nature's Perspective Landscaping?

Learn more [here](#) or call our office at **847-475-7917**

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