Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides landscape design and construction in Mount Prospect. Use these planning questions to prepare a project conversation.

Planning considerations

Ask five neighbors how often landscaping should be done and you will get five different answers. The yard with a clipped hedge and emerald lawn will swear by weekly service. The pollinator haven with native grasses gets touched once a month, maybe less. Both can be right. Frequency depends on what you have, your climate, and how you want the space to look and perform. The point is not to chase a calendar blindly, but to match tasks to plant biology and weather. A good seasonal checklist gives you the rhythm, then you fine tune it for your property.

How often should landscaping be done?

If you want a simple rule of thumb, weekly in spring, every two weeks in summer, monthly in fall, and as needed in winter is a solid starting point for temperate climates. In warm, fast-growing regions the summer frequency is weekly. In arid or northern climates, summer slows down and fall can be busier. Evergreen structure and hardscape hold up with less attention than beds loaded with annual flowers. Synthetic grass needs a fraction of the care of turf installation with cool-season grasses.

The right cadence varies by task. Lawn mowing happens weekly in peak growth. Mulching services are once per year, sometimes twice. Shrub pruning ranges from monthly touch-ups to two strategic passes a year. Irrigation checks should happen at season start, mid-summer, and before winter. Outdoor lighting benefits from a spring clean and a fall aim adjustment. Driveway pavers need joint sand checks every year or two. A paver walkway needs occasional edging and joint topping, while a concrete walkway mostly needs a sweep and crack watch.

Spring: reset, edge, and feed

Spring sets the tone for the year. The biggest gains come from reclaiming crisp edges and re-establishing coverage. Plants are pushing new growth, soils warm, and weeds see the same invitation.

Start by removing winter debris. A good spring cleanup pulls leaves out of shrub bases, skims matted material off perennial crowns, and lifts twigs that mold mulch. If you ask, what does a fall cleanup consist of, spring’s cleanout repeats the concept with more cutting and less leaf volume. For beds, cut back ornamental grasses before new blades push. Divide overgrown perennials like hosta and daylilies. Thin shrubs that flower on new wood, like panicle hydrangea, then let spring-flowering shrubs bloom before you prune them.

Lawn fertilization in spring should be modest. Overfeeding pushes soft growth that invites disease. A slow-release fertilizer at the label rate once the lawn is actively growing is enough. If broadleaf weeds are a known problem, integrated weed control with spot sprays avoids blanket herbicides. Lawn edging with a half-moon spade or steel edge defines the bed line and immediately elevates the look. The clean trench also slows grass invasion into beds.

Irrigation system checks belong in spring. A sprinkler system that was winterized needs a slow pressurization to avoid water hammer. Inspect each zone for stuck rotors, clogged nozzles, and misting that indicates too much pressure. If you have drip irrigation, flush the lines and clean filters. Smart irrigation controllers save water when

programmed well. Set seasonal adjust at a conservative level, then watch plant response. Remember, new plantings and sod will drink more for the first six weeks.

Summer: mow less often, water smarter, and edit growth

Irrigation becomes the main variable. Water management is not just about volume, but timing and distribution. Lawns prefer deep, infrequent watering, which encourages deeper roots. Set the irrigation system to run in early morning, not at night. For beds, drip irrigation targets the root zone, saves water, and keeps foliage dry. If you see runoff, shorten cycles and add more repeats, yielding the same total run time without overflow. Irrigation repair is common when the mower or foot traffic misaligns heads. A session in early summer to tune spray patterns and fix low heads pays for itself in saved water and healthier plants.

Shrubs and perennials need selective pruning to keep structure clean and pathways clear. Cut the stems, not just shear the tips, unless you grow a hedge that is meant to be shear-trained. Summer is a good time to remove water shoots from ornamental trees and deadhead perennials to extend bloom. If you planted annual flowers in spring, feed them lightly mid-summer and pinch back leggy growth. For ground cover installation such as pachysandra or vinca, keep encroachment off patios and the base of shrubs, and thin where mats get too dense.

Weed pressure peaks in early summer as soil warms. In mulch, a sharp hoe or a quick hand pull before the weed sets seed keeps things manageable. In gravel, a flame weeder the day after rain yields comical satisfaction and clean joints. Reserve herbicides for persistent perennials or along fence lines where mechanical control is awkward. Safety first around desirable plants and water features.

If you are considering a new project, you might ask, is it better to do landscaping in fall or spring? For hardscape like pathway design, paver walkway, stone walkway, or driveway installation, summer's stable weather and dry soils are ideal in many regions. For planting, fall is better in most climates because roots grow into warm soil while the canopy rests. Summer can work with proper watering, but stress is higher. It is the best time, however, to evaluate sun patterns for outdoor lighting placements and to add low voltage lighting where you notice dark spots along steps and walk edges.

Fall: plant, feed roots, and tidy with purpose

If you can pick a season to invest in your landscape, pick fall. Soil is warm, rain returns, and plants want to grow roots. Trees, shrubs, and most perennials establish faster and with less irrigation when planted in late summer through mid-fall. Even sod installation performs well; the cool nights help roots dig in without the heat stress of summer.

Beds benefit from a light mulch top-up in fall in windy or exposed sites, but avoid burying perennials that still need to harden off. Cutbacks depend on your goals. If you want a clean, low profile, cut perennials down once frost blackens foliage, leaving a few inches to catch snow and protect crowns. If you like winter structure and bird habitat, keep seedheads on echinacea, rudbeckia, and grasses. What does a fall cleanup consist of, in practice? Leaf removal from lawns to prevent smothering, light bed cutbacks, gutter clearing, and a last edge touch-up. On larger lots, a two-pass approach works best, a light early rake when half the leaves have dropped and a final sweep after the oaks finish.

Irrigation should be adjusted down as evapotranspiration drops. Before you winterize, run a system check and note any repairs for spring. Then drain or blow out the lines before consistent freezes. Drip zones that sit above ground freeze quickly and need extra attention.

Hardscape responds well to fall maintenance. For driveway pavers and paver walkway surfaces, sweep debris out of joints and replenish polymeric sand where needed so water does not sit and freeze. Check the slope on the driveway design, especially near the garage, and confirm that surface drainage flows away from the house. If you noticed ponding during summer storms, fall is a good time for drainage installation. The soil is workable, and contractors tend to have better availability than in spring.

Outdoor lighting appreciates a fall re-aim after leaf drop. What looked perfect in June will glare in October if fixture beams no longer filter through leaves. Clean lenses, check connections, and consider switching to lower wattage or warmer color lamps to soften the look in long nights.

Winter: protect, plan, and do the quiet work

Winter is a maintenance lull in many regions, but it is not a total pause. Evergreens appreciate a midwinter watering during dry spells if the ground is not frozen. In areas with heavy snow, tie up conical evergreens lightly with soft twine so snow loads do not splay them. Check tree staking and remove it if the tree has been in the ground for a year and is stable. This prevents girdling.

Winter is also prime planning season. How to come up with a landscape plan that you will not regret in June? Walk the property after a snow or heavy rain. You will see how you actually move through the space and where bottlenecks and slippery spots exist. Map sun angles and wind exposure. Decide on upgrades like a stone walkway to connect the side gate to the trash area, a permeable pavers apron to relieve ice buildup at the driveway edge, or expanding the garden bed installation to remove a patch of struggling turf. If you want to add xeriscaping in a dry climate, winter lets you source plants and materials thoughtfully and book a spring build date.

The practical cadence, by service

Lawn treatment: spring slow-release fertilizer and spot weed control, optional grub control where pressure is high, mid-summer light feed if grass is irrigated, fall winterizer. Aeration and overseeding once per year in fall for cool-season turf. Dethatching only when thatch exceeds a half inch, which is rarer in well-managed lawns.

Beds and pruning: monthly walkthroughs in growing season for weeding, deadheading, and structural pruning of fast growers. Two major pruning passes for shrubs and small trees, timed to bloom cycles. Mulch installation once per year. Soil amendment after a soil test, not by habit.

Installation projects and timing

What is the best time of year to do landscaping? For big builds that include soil disturbance, the best time of year to landscape is when the ground is workable, rain is manageable, and plants can establish quickly. Spring and fall fit that in most regions. Summer is excellent for hardscape if dust and heat are not a problem. Winter works for structural hardscape and lighting in mild climates.

pathway design and walkway installation depend on a stable base, so schedule them during a dry stretch. Paver walkway projects go fast once base prep starts, usually two to five days depending on length and details. Flagstone walkway work takes longer because each stone is hand-fit. Concrete walkway pours are quick, but you need dry weather and consistent temperatures for finishing and curing.

driveway installation has a wider range. A paver driveway might take a week or more for an average suburban size, with careful base compaction and edge restraints. A concrete driveway is often formed and poured within two days, then needs about a week before heavy use. driveway pavers cost more up front but offer permeability,

repairability, and visual character. Permeable pavers help with yard drainage, especially where you want to reduce runoff.

Irrigation installation is best done before plant installation so trenching does not wreck a finished bed. Drip irrigation pairs well with landscape planting that uses perennials and shrubs. A sprinkler system is appropriate for lawns and larger coverage areas. If you inherit a system that is wasteful, smart irrigation controllers, pressure regulation, and nozzle changes are small moves that save water.

Design and value: where to spend, what to avoid

What landscaping adds the most value to a home? Cleanlines and function do. An inviting entrance design, a tidy lawn or low-maintenance alternative, a simple garden path that directs guests intuitively, and lighting that frames the architecture and improves safety. Beyond that, what adds the most value to a backyard depends on how people use it. A patio with shade, a grilling station near the kitchen door, and comfortable circulation to lawn or play space beat an elaborate water feature for most families. If you want to spend on one thing, make sure you address water first. Good yard drainage and a reliable irrigation system underpin everything else.

Is it worth paying for landscaping? For ongoing maintenance, if your time is limited or you do not enjoy the work, a crew that keeps you on schedule is worth it. For design and installation, complex projects benefit from professional oversight. Are landscaping companies worth https://yonderstack.com/p/hb6nmVqPzTgU2gih0I08f.pdf the cost? The right company coordinates trades, sequences tasks, and stands behind the work. Is a landscaping company a good idea for small jobs? Sometimes. Many companies have a minimum, but some offer consultation or implement a phase of your plan while you handle the rest.

What is an example of bad landscaping? Beds crammed against the foundation with no scale transition. Trees planted too close to the house or each other. Drainage ignored so mulch floats and soil erodes. An overcomplicated plant palette that needs a botany degree to maintain. The difference between landscaping and lawn service is the difference between building a system and mowing what is there. Lawn service cuts grass and edges. Landscaping integrates lawn, planting, hardscape, water, and lighting.

Budget, frequency, and what the pros actually do

How often should landscapers come? For most single-family homes with lawn and beds, weekly in spring, every other week in summer, weekly again in early fall, then monthly or as-needed in winter. That schedule keeps edges sharp, weeds from seeding, and lawns in rhythm. What is included in landscaping services varies by company. A typical maintenance package covers lawn mowing, trimming, bed weeding, shrub pruning on a schedule, mulch once a year, seasonal color if you request it, irrigation checks, and leaf removal in fall. What is included in a landscaping service for a new install is different: site prep, soil amendment, topsoil installation where needed, plant installation with proper planting depth, sod or seed, irrigation adjustments, and a walkthrough on care.

What are the benefits of hiring a professional landscaper? Design coherence, correct installation of systems like drainage and irrigation, warranties on plant material, and predictable maintenance quality. What are the disadvantages of landscaping? Upfront cost, and if done poorly, the pain of fixing shortcuts. Should you spend money on landscaping? If resale is the driver, yes, but be strategic. A well-kept front yard signals care and adds curb appeal. What landscaping adds the most value? A healthy lawn or its low-maintenance equivalent, defined bed lines, a clear walkway to the door, and lighting. What type of landscaping adds value without high

maintenance? Mass plantings with a few standout specimens, a paver walkway to replace cracked concrete, and a simple native palette.

A seasonal checklist you will actually use

Spring: clean beds and lawn, edge, mulch, core aeration and overseeding if needed, light fertilization, irrigation startup and repairs, prune spring-bloomers after bloom, plant trees and shrubs, refresh joint sand in pavers, inspect drainage after storms. Summer: raise mow height and reduce frequency when heat hits, tune irrigation and fix heads, weed beds monthly, prune fast growers thoughtfully, deadhead perennials, clean and adjust lighting, schedule hardscape work in dry stretches. Fall: overseed and fertilize cool-season lawns, cut back where desired, remove leaves from turf, plant trees and perennials, top up mulch lightly, re-aim lighting after leaf drop, winterize irrigation, adjust drainage if ponding showed up. Winter: water evergreens during thaws if dry, protect vulnerable plants, service equipment, plan projects, interview pros, schedule spring builds, review lighting timers.

Final notes on timing and longevity

If you build the bones right, with drainage that works, an irrigation system tuned to your plants, and a planting plan that respects your climate, the frequency question becomes easier. You will work with the seasons, not against them, and the checklist becomes a set of habits. That is the real goal, not perfection, but a landscape that fits your life and rewards the time you spend in it.

Project brief

Start with the use of the space. Record the features you want to keep, the changes you are considering and questions that need a site visit. Photographs help connect each idea with the part of the property it concerns. Keep preferences separate from a proposed construction detail until the options have been discussed.