



PLAN IT IN WINTER. BE READY FOR SPRING.

The Winter Landscape Plan

A weekend walk, a wish list and a one-page brief for your design consultation.

For homeowners in Harford and Baltimore County planning a new landscape, a renovation, or a fix for the spot that floods every spring. Print it, grab a pen, and give it one weekend.

WHAT'S INSIDE

10-point property walk

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Dec–May planning timeline

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Why winter is the best time to plan

With the leaves down, a yard shows its bones. You can see where water sits, which shrubs have swallowed the windows, what stays green and what goes bare, and which views open up that summer hides.

It's also the quiet season. Plan now, and your design is ready when planting season opens, instead of starting the conversation once everyone else does.



A real Oakfield front yard after redesign and replanting.

1

Walk

PAGES 3–5

Give it an hour on a weekend, ideally the day after a rain. Check off the 10 points, sketch the yard and take a few photos.

2

Wish

PAGES 6–7

Sort what you want into must-have, nice-to-have and someday, then answer a few honest questions about how you live outside.

3

Brief

PAGES 8–10

See how the months ahead line up, pick the questions you want answered, then fill in the one-page brief and bring it to your consultation.

Year ten

Every Oakfield plan spaces plants for their adult size, so a new bed looks a little open on planting day. That's on purpose. On your walk, look for the opposite: plants that were set too close and have outgrown their spot.

Walk your property

Tip: walk it the day after a rain. Check each point, then jot what you saw.

WATER & SOIL

- ☐ **1 Where water sits after rain**
Puddles that last more than a day, and exactly where they form.
-

- ☐ **2 Where downspouts drain**
Follow each one. Does the water head for the house, the lawn or a neighbor?
-

- ☐ **3 Soggy or bare low spots**
Thin grass, moss or mud usually marks a spot that stays wet.
-

PLANTINGS

- ☐ **4 Shrubs hiding windows or walks**
Anything you push past on the path, or that blocks light indoors.
-

- ☐ **5 Plants that outgrew their spot**
Shrubs sheared into boxes every year, trees crowding the house or each other.
-

- ☐ **6 Trees and beds worth keeping**
Mark the healthy ones you love. A good plan works around them.
-

VIEWS & USE

- ☐ **7 Views to frame, views to screen**
Stand at the kitchen window and the back door. What do you want to see?
-

- ☐ **8 Where you want more privacy**
A neighbor's windows, the road, a new house going up next door.
-

- ☐ **9 Spots you'd use after dark**
Paths, steps, the patio, a tree worth lighting.
-

- ☐ **10 Where you gather, play or relax**
Where everyone actually ends up outside, and where you wish you could.
-

Rough is fine. Draw the house first, then mark what you found with these symbols.

 Shade

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What your walk is telling you

Most of what you checked falls into one of three stories.

POINTS 1-3 · WATER

Find the cause before the fix

Most Harford County yards sit on slow-draining clay, and heavy downpours arrive faster than it can soak them up. The fix depends on why the water stays, so try this in the wet spot: dig a hole about a foot deep and fill it with water.

Drains in a few hours

The soil can move water. The problem is almost certainly the grade: a slope running the wrong way, or a low spot collecting runoff.

Still full the next day

It's the clay itself, or groundwater sitting close to the surface. Regrading alone won't fix that, so it needs a different plan.

- ✗ **Don't mix sand into clay.** Without plenty of organic matter it can set up even harder and drain worse.
- ✗ **Don't just fill the low spot with topsoil.** It hides the problem for a season and moves the water, sometimes toward your foundation.
- ✗ **Don't pipe water onto a neighbor's lot.** In Maryland, adding to or redirecting the natural flow can make you liable.

[Read: Standing Water in Your Harford County Yard →](#)

POINTS 4-6 · PLANTINGS

Outgrown, or just overdue?

Usual suspects in older Harford County yards:

Yews

Burning bush

Forsythia

Bradford pear

Crowded Japanese maples

Prune and keep when plants are only a little oversized and you like them.

Remove and replant when the layout works but some plant choices were wrong.

Renovate when you checked several points and the design is 15+ years old.

[Read: Signs your landscape has outgrown its design →](#)

POINTS 7-10 · VIEWS & USE

Plan for the view you see most

You look at your yard through a window far more than you stand in it, and for a good part of the year it looks the way it does today.

- ☐ Does it look empty from the kitchen in January?
- ☐ Does a screen that works in July go see-through in winter?
- ☐ Is it all brown and bare until spring?
- ☐ Would you use the yard more if you could see it after dark?

Each yes is something a plan can fix with evergreen structure, winter berries and bark, or lighting.

Your wish list

Circle anything that appeals, add your own, then sort it into the three columns.

Privacy screen

Shade trees

Flowering trees

New foundation beds

Low-maintenance plantings

Native & pollinator garden

Deer-resistant plants

Color in every season

Fix standing water

Rain garden

Landscape lighting

Water feature

Patio or seating area

Walkway or steps

Room for kids or dogs

Screen the road

Frame the front door

Replace overgrown shrubs

Must-have

The reasons you're doing this at all.

Nice to have

You'd do it if the budget and space allow.

Someday

Not this year, but worth planning around.

Someday still counts. Put it on the list. A good plan leaves room for the patio or the lighting you'll add in two years, so phase two never means tearing out phase one.

How you'll really use it

The regret we hear most is "It's beautiful, but we never use it." Honest answers prevent it.

Time for yard care

Be realistic, not aspirational.

☐ Almost none ☐ 1–2 hours a week ☐ I love to garden ☐ Hire it out

Who uses the yard?

☐ Adults ☐ Young kids ☐ Teens ☐ Dogs ☐ Guests

When are you outside most?

☐ Mornings ☐ Evenings ☐ Weekends ☐ After dark

How do you want to use it?

☐ Relax ☐ Entertain ☐ Play ☐ Grow things ☐ The view

Do deer come through?

Common near farmland and woods.

☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never seen them

Water supply

A well can limit irrigation.

☐ Public water ☐ Well ☐ Not sure ☐ Rather not irrigate

HOA approval needed?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Three words for your style

Natural, tidy, cottage, modern...

A budget range you're comfortable with

\$ _____ to \$ _____ ☐ All at once ☐ In phases



Where the budget goes first

Drainage and grading are invisible once the work is done, which makes them tempting to trim. On Harford County clay they decide whether everything built on top of them lasts, so they come first.

From plan to planting

Timing varies by project and weather.

DEC**Walk & wish**

YOU

Walk the yard, start your list. Work through pages 3 to 7 over a weekend.

JAN**Consultation**

TOGETHER

Eric walks the property with you, looks at the soil, sun, drainage and what's already growing, and goes through your brief.

FEB**Planning & budget**

OAKFIELD

The design takes shape around your priorities and your budget.

MAR**Planning & budget**

TOGETHER

Finalize the plan and the timing, so installation is scheduled before the season opens.

APR**Installation**

OAKFIELD

Planting season opens. Our own crew installs the plan. No subcontractors.

MAY**Final walkthrough**

TOGETHER

Walk the finished work together and go over how to care for it.

Why start in winter

Design and planning happen while the ground is dormant, so the plan is finished when planting season arrives rather than waiting for it.

Not every project fits six months

A bed refresh can move faster. Bigger grading, drainage or permit work can take longer. Your consultation sets a real timeline.

10 questions to ask a designer

Ask any company you're considering, including us. Circle the ones that matter most to you.

1 Who designs it, and who installs it?

LISTEN FOR One team, so the people who drew the plan are accountable for building it.

2 Can I see projects like mine?

LISTEN FOR Their own photos of similar size and budget, plus what was hard about each.

3 Who will I work with from start to finish?

LISTEN FOR Named people with clear roles, not "whoever's available."

4 How do you plan for the plants' adult size?

LISTEN FOR Spacing for mature size, not a full look on day one that's crowded by year five.

5 What will you do about drainage on my lot?

LISTEN FOR A diagnosis first (grade, soil or groundwater) before anyone picks a fix.

6 What if something unexpected turns up?

LISTEN FOR A call the same day, options with costs, and your approval before work goes on.

7 What happens if a plant dies the first season?

LISTEN FOR A written plant warranty, and exactly what it does and doesn't cover.

8 What does a project like mine cost, and what's included?

LISTEN FOR A realistic range, with the major pieces listed. "Impossible to say" is a red flag.

9 What permits or HOA approvals will we need?

LISTEN FOR Local knowledge, and a clear answer on who prepares and files what.

10 How long from design approval to final walkthrough?

LISTEN FOR Realistic timeframes and what could change them. "We can start tomorrow" in peak season is a warning.

Whoever you hire, also ask for proof of current liability insurance, call a reference or two, and get the full scope and price in writing before any money changes hands.

[Read: Landscape Designer vs. Landscaper vs. Lawn Service →](#)

Your one-page project brief

Fill it in from pages 3 to 7, then bring it and your photos to your consultation.

NAME

PHONE

EMAIL

TOWN

BEST WAY TO REACH YOU ☐ Call ☐ Text ☐ Email

MY TOP THREE MUST-HAVES

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

WORTH KEEPING

THE LOOK I LIKE

BUDGET RANGE

_____YARD CARE TIME ☐ Almost none ☐ A little ☐ I love to garden ☐ Hire it outTIMING ☐ This spring ☐ This year ☐ In phases ☐ Just exploring

ANYTHING ELSE WE SHOULD KNOW

_____

Ready to walk it together?

Call (443) 794-8108, email eric@oakfieldlandscaping.com or book at oakfieldlandscaping.com.