

Design In a Day Landscaping



Fire pit adds visual appeal to this patio.



Low water feature adds drama to home's entry.



Natural planting brings color and texture to this hillside.

By Carol Lindsay

When you decide that it is time to get some professional help and bring in a designer to tame your landscape, you will find a variety of choices. One option is Landscape Design In A Day (DIAD); it's a fast, fun, and collaborative way of approaching the design process. For people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do a little of the pre-design work, this is the way to go. You save a lot of time and as much as half of what a full service design process would cost.

Over two decades ago, when I was studying to become a landscape designer, I was taught the traditional landscape design process. We were taught that the process required numerous site visits, repeated client meetings, and hours in the design studio pouring over drawings and plant catalogs.

In my early practice, I noticed a problem with the traditional method. It took too long and it cost too much to be affordable, and it limited accessibility for clients with smaller properties. Being new to the business, my response to this problem was to do a lot of free design work. This wasn't going work out long-term. Then I attended a workshop by a guy named Joel Lerner, a Washington, DC marketing genius who enlightened me to the fact that there can be different ways of doing design. Over the following winter I sat down with another designer with similar frustrations and painstakingly created a simpler and more accessible process of affordable landscape design for our clients — with our clients. The result is Design In A Day, which works like this:

Step 1: Using the Design in a Day kit, you answer a few questions and measure your site, saving time and money.

Step 2: Your designer looks over your work and studies your landscape drawing and photos.

Step 3: Your designer then interviews you over the phone, using email to further prepare for the design day.

Step 4: Together, you and the designer

create a design tailored to your needs. Usually the design is created at your kitchen table. At the end of the design day, you have your design and can start working on your dream landscape right away. And you helped make it possible!

Once I started working this way, I discovered that my ideas were better when created under a bit of pressure. My creativity suffers when I have time to consider 20 different ideas. Having my clients right there at their kitchen table with me saves me the time of chasing down ideas that don't fit their needs. When it clicks, I feel like I'm pulling the heart of the design right out of their heads. We get on the same wavelength and that creates a very good collaboration. I love that moment when my client picks up a pencil and starts marking up the paper, too. After all these years of creating designs with my clients, what I love most is the magic that pulls our ideas together into the perfect plan. We all know when it happens and I call that the AHA moment.

When I created DIAD I expected to be working with people who wanted to keep it all hands on. It turns out that only about 50% of the clients are DIYers. John and Brenda are DIYers and needed a design for a newly constructed home. They had that funny lot that's usually on a cul-de-sac and has a pointy slice of the front yard that expands to a pie shape. They liked the collaborative style of Design in a Day. The finished design, our design, included the driveway and walk, which their builder then installed. But they did the rest themselves, including a very professional looking water feature. The end result was a landscape that solved all the problems and matched the beauty of their custom Craftsman home. "We did everything exactly as designed and it turned out great!" said John and Brenda.

Not a DIYer? I have also found that this process works for clients who want a collaborative design process and want to save time and money, but want to have the new landscape installed by professionals. These clients are happy to do

their measuring and pre-design work (DIAD kit) and they want to do their own planting (except for big trees). They hire one of my fully vetted and talented landscape professionals to handle most of the installation. I make it possible for them to do the easy parts themselves.

A very popular service that I offer them is a plant broker, Roger Miller, to help them procure all the plants. Over half of my clients order their plants and have them delivered; then I lay out the plants for proper spacing. I supervise them planting and walk them through the first year of watering and maintenance as their garden coach. Most of my clients want to plant their own plants and if the soil is prepped as I recommended, it's an easy and satisfying day of work in their new yard.

Once you have your design, you can DIY or use my referred professionals or

some other professional that you prefer. That is a benefit to using an independent designer rather than a designer who works for an installation company. Many also use some of my post-design services to help guide the installation or use garden coach services to get their landscape off to a great start.

Working at the kitchen table, on site with my client, to create their design means we have the AHA moment together. Working in my studio means I have those AHA moments but can only share them with my cat, who frankly doesn't care to collaborate. ■

Carol Lindsay is the owner of Landscape Design in a Day. Lindsay specializes in fast and very creative landscape design. She can be contacted at carol@design-in-a-day.com, or call 503-223-2426. For more information, visit www.design-in-a-day.com.

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