

GARDENS Four Seasons

GARDENDESIGN - MAR/APR. 2017

“If you’re bringing in an expert to design your landscaping, the mark of a true pro will be measured if they’re making sure to account for grading around your home.”

Mike Holmes
Holmes Makes it Right - HGTV

(appreciate the confirmation Mike!)

DRAINAGE ISSUES

While this topic isn’t an actual DESIGN topic - I want to take a look at it since it is so very important to the success of any landscape design. Plus this time of year it is top of mind for a lot of people. Ask any experienced, knowledgeable landscape contractor & they will tell you it is one of THE most important aspects to consider before tackling any landscape - whether new or an existing reno.

In my 30 some years as a Landscape Designer I have seen numerous situations where drainage has caused major problems not only with a client's yard but also with neighbouring properties. Sometimes it is even the neighbour's property that causes the problem. I highly recommend if you have a brand new lot that you make correct & adequate drainage around & away from your house your first priority. If you have an existing yard & wish to correct drainage issues, by all means do so. However, in either case, please take into consideration how it will affect nearby yards. It really pays in more ways than one, to be a good neighbour & collaborate on elevations on both sides of the fence!



I recall one homeowner who had built their first home home on a very new block. When all the surrounding lots were developed, each of them had raised the grade in their own yards just a bit more than the next which resulted in the first family's yard becoming the runoff area. It was so bad that they had to sell the house at a substantial loss & start over.

Another homeowner ended up in the same situation when a brand new house was built next door & raised their grade a full foot above everyone else's. (I kid you NOT!)

Unfortunately, even though there are bylaws in place to encourage proper grading, & enforcement is getting better, the onus to pursue & correct any issues falls mostly on homeowners themselves.

I spoke with Luke Rempel of CITY GARDENS Landscapes because I consider him THE expert on drainage. He offered these tips:

NEW YARDS

Luke's #1 recommendation for new yards - let the soil around the foundation settle for one year ideally. To speed up the process you can excavate around it about 2' down & employ a jumping jackhammer to pack in 6" to 8" increments. They also use Geotextile fabric around the foundation to help with compaction & stabilization of the soil. Use soil or topsoil that will pack down & become an H2O barrier - do not use sand or gravel as fill to correct grade in your yard. (I learned THAT one personally the hard way ;(

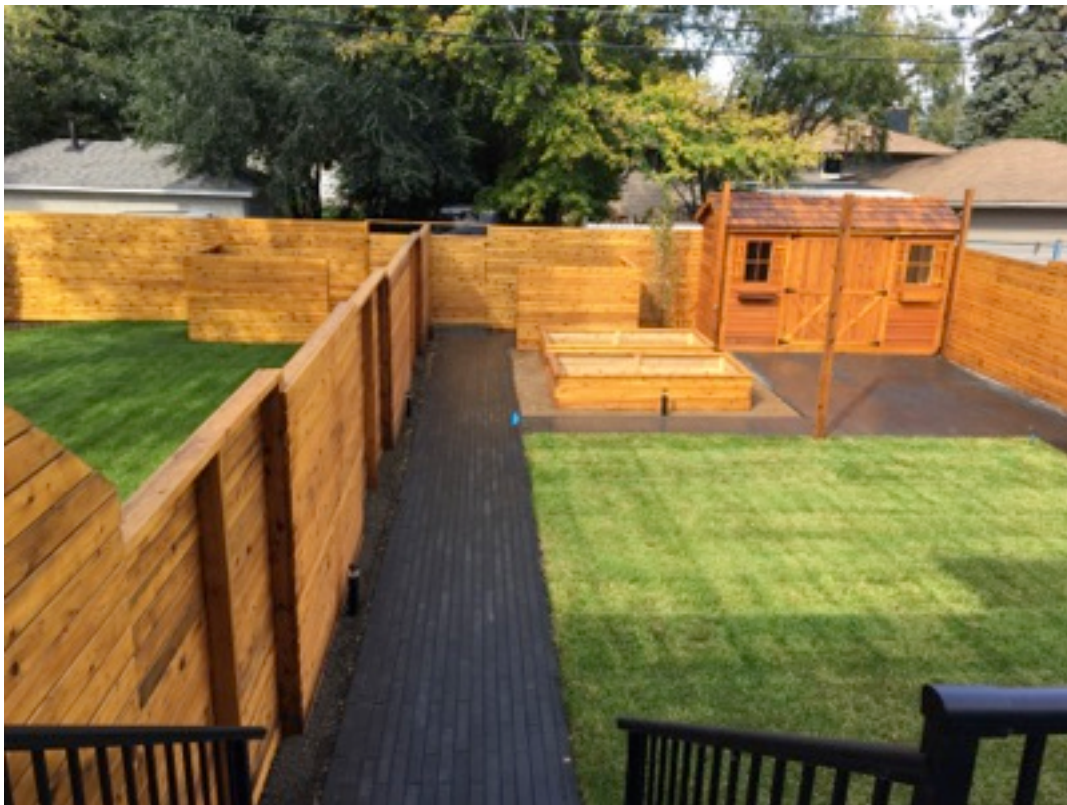


Another tip is to lay a soaker near the concrete base. I recall my Dad suggesting this to neighbours when we settled in a new community. They were skeptical until he used the trick on our own yard. It settled the soil so much that to this day - 40 years later there is no slumping whatsoever. He would place the soaker hose, face down along one basement wall. Then he'd turn on the tap for 2-3 days so a slow trickle soaked into the soil. The ground would actually cave in & he'd pack it with more soil.

This was repeated around all sides of the house over a number of days. (It took a fair bit of water but what a smart investment!)

EXISTING YARDS

Landscapes in older areas have usually been changed significantly & also settled a lot. There are often tighter grading restrictions to move water away from the house. Luke suggests making use of a swale to direct water away from your home (but not into the adjacent yard.) He also recommends replacing old concrete walkways, & patios as they end up slumping towards basements. Install paving stone surfaces because they are much better for drainage & easier to repair if our wonderful freeze/thaw cycle wreaks havoc by shifting the ground.



- great pic of a newly installed walkway using these cool new LONG pavers - exquisite! (photo courtesy CITY GARDENS)

Soft Landscaping (planted beds, lawn, etc.) requires a minimum grade of 2 degrees away from the foundation while Hard Landscaping (patios, walkways, etc.) requires at least a grade of 1 degree sloped away.



- a lot of surface in our neighbourhoods is covered by roofs!

A comment made by my Son years ago still resonates with me you have this huge square footage of your roof collecting rain & snow runoff - then it travels down your spouts & ends up in your yard. Luke totally agrees with that observation - you want to direct H₂O far away from your foundation - a minimum of at least 3' away from your house (preferably 6' or more) Ensuring all your eaves & downspouts are in good repair & are cleaned regularly goes without saying.





- how NOT to have your downspouts ending!

When window wells are needed - have them properly installed including adequate drainage at the base.



NEW or EXISTING

“Positive Grade” is sloped properly away from house, while “Negative Grade” is a slope towards the house.

Ideally, soil levels should slope slightly down from the house walls which in turn would direct any extra water as far away from the foundation as possible. (this also applies to sump pump outlets) A perfect scenario would be having it flow to the each side of the yard & then head out towards the front street or back alley. Keep in mind tho’, there are exceptions to every site & this solution might not work specifically for your yard.

For DIYers, the City of Saskatoon’s Development branch offers a service where they will locate your back lot corner grades using GEODEDIC - a measurement showing elevation above sea level. Then you can sort out the balance of elevations using that measurement as a starting point. They even offer 4 different type of drainage plans for new lots, including proper degrees of slope. Luke supplied a couple of valuable links for your reference:

If you follow this link & click on **Lot Drainage**, It will bring up all of the drawings for the different lots.

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/business-development/development-regulation/specifications-standards/specifications>

Drainage Bylaw

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-clerk/bylaws/8379.pdf>

So, in closing, I cannot reiterate enough how absolutely necessary proper drainage is in ANY yard. No matter how well your house is constructed it must have proper drainage to mitigate future water issues. I recall the advice of Mike Holmes - water near or in your house is not your friend! & I quote him again - ***“If you’re bringing in an expert to design your landscaping, the mark of a true pro will be measured if they’re making sure to account for grading around your home.”***

btw - if DIY is not your thing CITY GARDENS uses a slope laser on every job. They even offer a service that will plan out your ideal grade new or existing yards - highly recommended before ANY landscaping is done. Just sayin’!

Thanks much Luke, for your help in this edition of GARDENDESIGN!



<http://www.city-gardens.ca>

306-280-6609



UPCOMING EVENTS

GARDENSCAPE - March 24 - 26, 2017

Drop by **GARDENS Four Seasons'** booth & say Hi!

I'll be there all weekend @ Prairieland Park :)



ADMISSION

Daily General Admission: \$12.00

Two-Day Admission: \$18.00

Three-Day Admission: \$26.00

Student (15 & under): FREE

SHOW HOURS

Friday, March 24: 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 25: 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 26: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Don't forget my **PINTEREST** site - just be prepared to spend a little bit of relaxing time to browse!

Go to my website - www.gardensfourseasons.com & click on the icon & voila !



OR Simply click the following link :

<https://www.pinterest.com/gardens4seasons/boards/>



PLANT OF THE MONTH

POLAR BEAR WILLOW

- *Salix salicola* 'Polar Bear'

'The most humungous Pussy Willows I have even seen!' was my exact thought upon discovering this gem of a gorgeous tree. Well, small tree/large shrub really. Reaching a mature height of 10' with a spread of about 6' - it can be used as either a 'Specimen' plant or planted en masse. Prior to the silvery leaves appearing each Spring, it offers up the most magnificent, soft, furry pussy willows, & who doesn't like them! Even when it leafs out - the leaves themselves resemble a silky mini-lamb's ear. How appropriate to herald Easter time!



Another nice feature is its adaptability - hardy to zone 2, it tolerates a wide range of soils but actually thrives best in clay soil. (I know, I had to read it twice too! :) It grows well in full sun or part-shade & is one of the fastest growing shrubs I know of.



Being a willow - it loves lots of moisture but is also quite drought tolerant. (so that means you can direct your downspout directly towards it or not!) It can be a bit open in branching habit but that's easily remedied with a quick snip or two of the pruners. There is no colour change in Autumn, but during the growing season it makes a superb contrast against other foliage colours. The upright, oval shape along with the plushy catkins once the snow melts makes it one of my favourites.



DESIGN BRILLIANCE

These TINY HOUSES are getting so much attention & rightfully so - they are a Design Marvel in construction being both extremely functional & pleasingly liveable. (It's easy to overlook the fact our houses are the centre of attraction in our own landscapes!)

I'm so proud to announce my first born son, Orion, has taken on the construction of a TINY HOUSE. His proposal is well thought out & aims to provide a proper home for someone in need. Well worth the read! Please donate if you can & spread the word if you can't - thanks so much!



Looking to raise \$5000 to start building a tiny house for someone with no house *living in Canada in third world conditions* before winter of 2017. There is an ever growing housing.....click the link below to learn more -

<https://www.gofundme.com/a-home-for-someone-in-need>

or go to GARDENS Four Seasons FACEBOOK -

<https://www.facebook.com/GardensFourSeasonsLandscapeDesign/>

ISLAND BEDS will be up for consideration
in May/June's **GARDENDESIGN**

While you are enjoying Spring 2017 - why not review the
BACK ISSUE on
LANDSCAPING for LOW MAINTENANCE

Send me a request & you'll have it before your eyes in no time at all!

Feel free to forward this to any friends!
(or they can email me to request their own copy!)

DID YOU KNOW? - I never, Ever, EVER share my email list - EVER! :)

* to UNSUBSCRIBE from GARDENDESIGN please reply to this email with NO THANKS!