

Planning new landscaping during weak economy

By Judy Maier

If you want new landscaping but feel you have to put your plans on hold until the economy turns around, don't let

go of your intentions and dreams. Consider the following alternative thoughts on landscape plans.

- Have an initial consultation with a landscape designer on renovating your current land-

BY THE YARD

scape or planning a new one.

- Ask a garden designer about the different services he or she provides for clients, the design process and the best options for your project and situation.

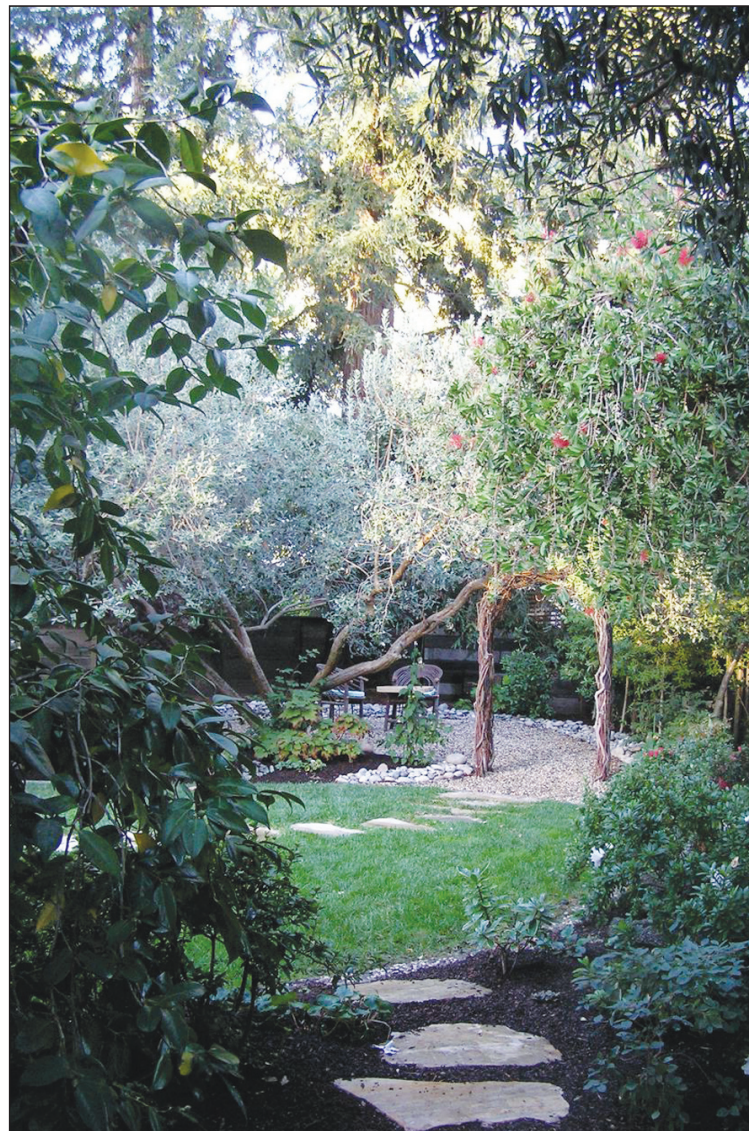
- If you plan to redesign and install a new landscape, get started with the first phase of that process, the planning and design stage. It will give you plenty of time to work on this important step before moving on to installation. Installation can be completed in stages rather than all at once, or even at a later date, but you will now have a plan in hand, ready to take action when the time is ripe.

- If you are not ready or don't need a full-scale design, consider renovating, adding or deleting to create new spaces and a fresh feel.

- For a sustainable approach, reuse existing materials in different ways to save resources and money. Ask a designer for some specific ideas for your property when he or she comes to visit.

- Have pots or a bed designed

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COURTESY OF JUDY MAIER

A backyard can be redesigned around existing trees and shrubs. This garden gained an archway and pathway to update the look.



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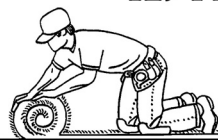


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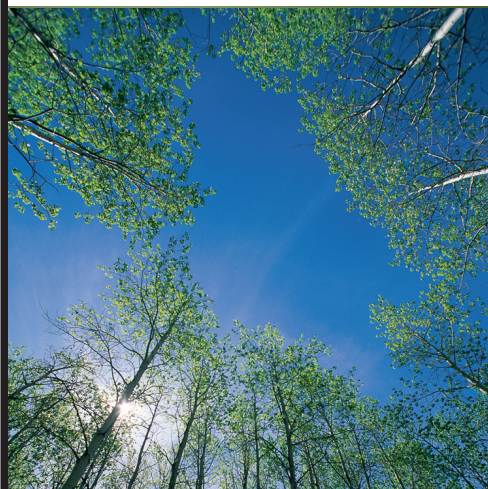
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A custom-designed willow arch creates a unique entryway to any garden.

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to put sparkle back in the garden.

- Design your garden and install a section of it, perhaps the part most viewed from the house – the kitchen, living room or bedroom window – or the part you would most use.

- Perhaps your current garden has potential that a fine gardener or pruner can help reveal with the right care.

- Have an irrigation specialist conduct an irrigation audit.

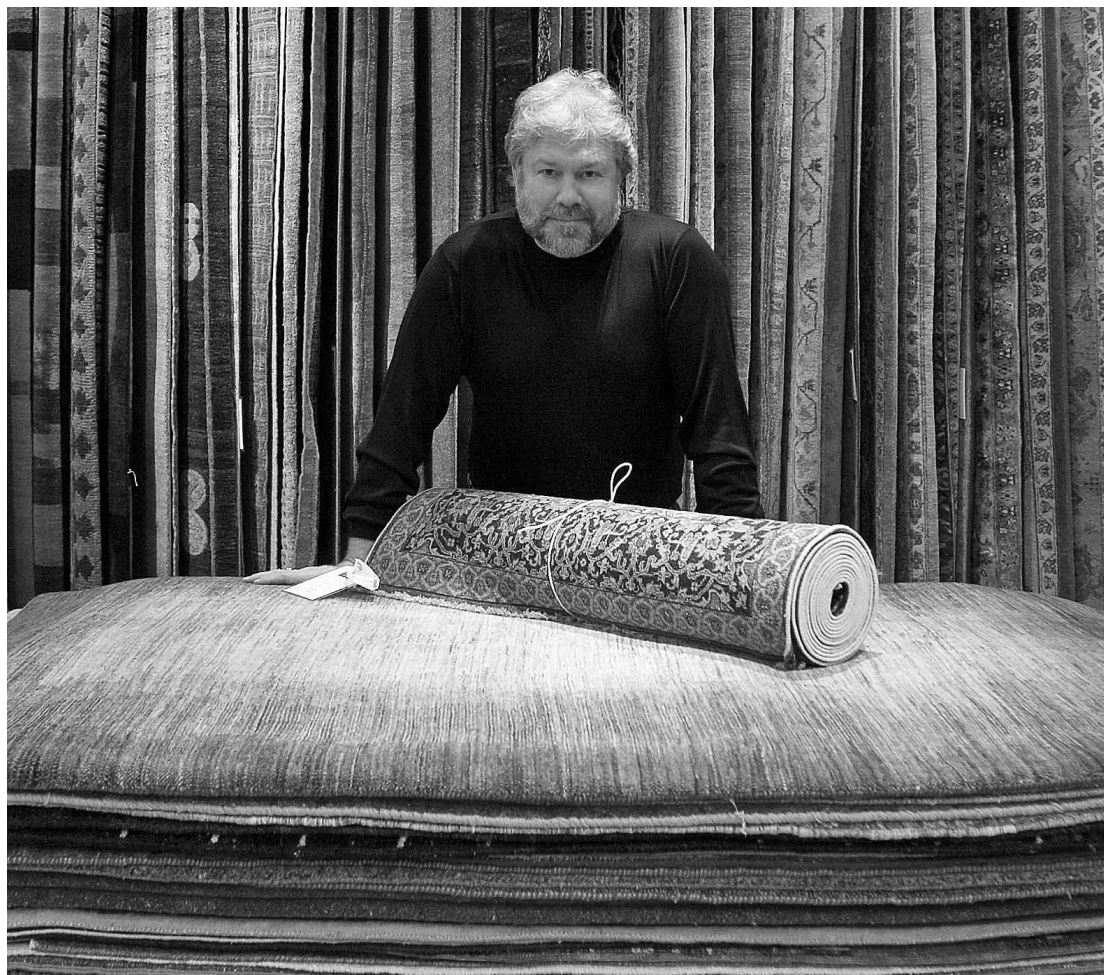
Remember, if you are going to redesign the entire landscape eventually, it is best to have the

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A secret garden in full bloom tucked in the corner of a backyard can offer a drought-tolerant, low-water refuge.

COURTESY OF JUDY MAIER



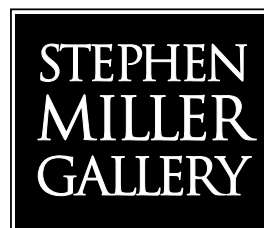
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The Japanese-style viewing garden in the yard of an Eichler home uses a permeable hardscape material for the groundcover.

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full design done at once so that a cohesive design can be installed throughout the property. Again, installation can be done in phases or at a later date.

Depending on the specific

situation, there are things a contractor can do to prepare for the job or to maintain the current landscape until you are ready for installation.

The following preinstallation measures could also conserve water and lower your water bill.

- Remove the lawn now and

apply a heavy mulch to prepare and nourish the ground for planting later. Plant a nitrogen-fixing temporary planting, or a low-mow, low-water grass or groundcover.

- Upgrade the irrigation clock. There are new timers, "Smart Controllers," on the market that can read the weather and automatically adjust a system accordingly.

- Upgrade the irrigation system, installing a drip or other low-water emission system if appropriate. If you plan to install a new landscape, this is one of the first steps after grading.

Judy Maier is a landscape and garden designer, horticulturalist, estate landscape manager, fine-aesthetic pruner, artist and member of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers. Contact her at (408) 398-3161, judy@judysgardens.com or www.judysgardens.com.

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Suggestions for greening the garden

- Plant some edibles in the garden, including vegetable beds, edibles mixed with other plantings and fruit trees.
- Pick plants suitable for the microclimate, including drought-tolerant and native plants.
- Compost kitchen scraps and other organic matter to create rich, wonderful nutrients for the plants and trees. Using compost can completely eliminate the need for other fertilizers, particularly chemical fertilizers that pollute the water table.
- Add 3-6 inches of mulch atop your garden bed to hold moisture into the ground, add nutrients and prevent weeds.
- Talk to a gardener about using natural and organic fertilizers and products rather than chemical products.
- Consider permeable hardscape solutions. There are many. Ask a designer for ideas.