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From the Ground Up

Proper planning for optimal landscaping.

Somewhere at the top of our wish list is the instantly perfect yard. Landscape professionals claim it's our need for immediate gratification. We know better. After enduring months of wind chills, lake-effect snow and a landscape so lacking color that it looks like an Ansel Adams photograph, we need signs of life.

So we create our list of landscape demands. We want tulips, daffodils and blooming bushes by March. Our landscape designers, in response, utter the dreaded four-letter word: PLAN. In fact, all of the landscape professionals we spoke with agreed that without proper planning, homeowners will be dissatisfied with the outcome, and may incur significant additional cost.

Dan McClaren, director of design for Impullitti Landscaping Inc. in Chagrin Falls, says that it all comes down to knowing your property. "Whether it's a new home or a renovation of existing landscaping, try to live with it for awhile," he says.

"The longer you can live with what exists, the more you learn about the idiosyncrasies of the site. Look for good views. Be aware of unsightly views. If you live in a subdivision, consider that a deck will make you feel like you're on stage. Consider drainage properties on the site."

It's also important to think beyond the aesthetics. While having a lush lawn and beautiful flowers are factors, consider how the yard will be used. Think about your family's entertaining habits, whether young children will use the space, whether you like to cook and whether you want a pool, deck, patio or water feature.
