

A Conversation with Phase One Landscapes

CH&L chats with Dave Graham, principal and co-founder of Phase One Landscapes

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CH&L: Clients come to Phase One Landscapes for...

Dave Graham: *Our expertise, our value and our solutions.* At Phase One Landscapes, we uncover what clients really want in their outdoor living space. We get to know them and ask specific lifestyle questions: Is it a friendly, safe place for kids to play? Is it a quiet sanctuary away from the rest of the world? Is it a cozy haven to relax with friends at the end of the day? We're intuitive, and we're good listeners, so we can give our clients customized outdoor living solutions for how they live – all in ways that get them the most value for what they want to spend.

CH&L: The Phase One Landscapes design philosophy is...

DG: *Function and form, followed by flair.* All our projects are designed to extend our clients' living spaces into the garden. After we establish the function of the space, we also ask questions to determine the clients' desired level of involvement in maintenance and gardening. We match the design plans to what's really going to take place in the space – so living happens, and not worrying.

Then we consider form. We address the things people don't see that affect the quality and longevity of the landscaping -- structural elements, grades, quality of soil, drainage and utilities for fire pits or pools. We can design shading and screening to create privacy, or we can incorporate design elements to enhance views subliminally.

Then, we add creative flair to the layout of the elements, and how they accentuate the home or building. We select plantings, pavers, and materials to harmonize with existing pieces. We make everything livable and beautiful.

CH&L: What are the latest trends in landscape design?

DG: *It's changing with the demands of the environment and the economy.* In the early years of xeriscaping, nurseries didn't carry the kinds of ornamental grasses and low-maintenance perennials that water boards were calling for. People were referred to mail-order services and had to work hard to locate and purchase conservation-friendly plants. Today, nurseries stock a regular supply of xeriscaping options that are not only environmental and drought-hardy, but full of color and beauty.

Landscaping is also getting more economical and "value engineering" is part of every project. For example, companies are hitting the market with quality paver alternatives that function like stone, don't crack like concrete, and cost up to 25% less.

CH&L: At Phase One Landscapes, you're passionate about...

DG: *Making everything "just right."* We're led by an 1896 quote by the famous garden designer Gertrude Jekyll:

"Just right. It takes more time, more trouble, but then it is just right and to see and to know that it is 'just right' is a daily reward and a never-ending source of satisfaction."

This belief guides us from our initial conversations with our clients, through the planning and designing, to the planting and installation by our crews. We take the time and we tackle the trouble. Our clients know what is "just right" when they see it, and we want them to always experience it – not just as our trucks pull away, but for years to come.

CH&L: The most inspiring thing Phase One Landscapes has seen lately is...

DG: *Resurgence in the passion for beautiful landscaping and enhanced outdoor living spaces.* People are rediscovering their love of the outdoors, and they want to spend more time enjoying their yards and properties. After several years of a

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downed economy, people are taking their dreams of patios, pools, fireplaces, and outdoor kitchens off hold and are ready again to invest in their homes and how they live. This renewed excitement for a product and service that we've loved for so many years inspires us, and makes us want to help more people find expertise, value, and solutions for their gardens and outdoor living.

CH&L: What are the hallmarks of your landscape design?

DG: *Integration, harmony, and creative solutions to the great big outdoors.* We design and implement high-value plans that make the most of our clients' homes, inside and out. We create landscaping that is congruent with the structural and environmental state of the property, in ways that reflect our clients' lifestyles and their individualism.

Finally, we believe that when people see a project by Phase One Landscapes, they know it's more than just nice to look at. They know it's taken into account the infrastructure - the soil, grading, drainage, piping, and required electricity or gas elements. They know that everything they can see - and everything they can't - is beautiful and just right.

CH&L: What's one thing you want homeowners considering a new landscape to know?

DG: Despite the shovels and wheelbarrows, landscaping is a delicate undertaking. It involves a fine-tuning of earth, air, water, and light, which can all affect the beauty, health, and livelihood of the garden and outdoor living spaces.

Phase One Landscapes always advises people to scratch below the surface of any landscape design plan or quote they receive. Does it address drainage, soil prepping, and underground utilities? Is its required maintenance in line with what they're willing to do? Does it adjust with seasonal changes, snow and ice, and hot August days? And does the designer understand how the space will be used?

Phase One Landscapes encourages people to consider these questions and share honest answers with their designer. Landscaping can be a sizeable investment, and there is not a lot of desire or capacity for do-overs. At the end of the day, people want to be sure they get a beautiful, functional, healthy landscape that matches their lifestyle and stands the test of time. At Phase One Landscapes, we see that as a daily reward, and a never-ending source of satisfaction.

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