

PLOT

Crafting the garden of your dreams

After planning comes the execution so get cracking with right kind of knowhow, time frame, budget and material to make the garden of your dreams but don't discard the garden plan till everything is in place, says N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY



Garden bed should have fertile soil for optimum growth

After garden planning comes the real job of bringing the two-dimensional image on paper into three-dimensional reality on the ground! Dreams may be full of colours, but realising them is all about brickwork! With the right kind of knowhow, time frame, budget, men and materials, one can do it so successfully that the picture will soon transform into picture-perfect! However, one must not discard the plan till it stands on the ground.

Site preparation
To begin with, one must clean the site by removing construction debris and other unwanted materials. Grading (preparing the slope as per the requirement) and levelling of the site should be done according to the design. Site should be checked for big boulders or continuous sheet of rock underneath, so as to modify the planting plan accordingly.

Underground works like cables, drains, pipelines should be completed beforehand to avoid digging later. Proper drainage is essential to have sustainable landscape. In case of very poor drainage, sub-surface drainage system has to be provided.

Remove weeds along with their roots, to prevent them from returning. Weeds become a menace, especially in lawns. So it could be better if you allow weeds by watering the bed for about a

few weeks so that they can be removed before laying the lawn.

Soil preparation

Garden bed should have rich, fertile soil for optimum growth of plants and bright blooms. If the soil is not conducive for plant growth, import good soil and prepare it with amendments such as manure. Soil test may be undertaken to know whether it is suitable for plant growth. Soil in planters and pots tends to dry out quickly and to avoid this, choose potting soil that retains moisture. Add enough quantity of manure to the beds of trees

Choose good quality plant material from the nursery as per the requirement

and shrubs but not for the lawn bed, as the seeds of weed present in the manure may germinate and become a problem later. It is advisable to add organic amendments such as vermicompost and neem cake to the lawn bed. Depth of the soil bed varies with the type of plants. For lawns, a bed of four to six inches is sufficient whereas for the ground-covers and shrubs the depth should be one to one-and-half feet and for the tree species one has to go for at least two feet deep soil-bed preparation.

Civil works

Civil works is the most time-consuming activity during any landscape development. Build the hard-landscape features and

garden amenities like walkways, driveways, retaining walls, planter boxes, steps, illumination, gazebos, patios, decks, arbours, trellises, fences, ponds, garden furniture, fountains, pedestals (for sculptures and other decoration elements) and play equipment before the greening work. Consider the drainage of rain water and excess moisture while deciding the level of walkways, lest the paths may become waterways. Necessary drain arrangements like laying drain pipes and collecting pits should be provided to avoid inundation of the garden. Root barricading / kerb may be required to avoid the roots interfering with the civil structures and to stop the lawn grass from spreading.

Garden illumination

In many gardens illumination is not given priority, due to which the garden beauty disappears with the sunset. With good lighting you can extend the garden hours, and enjoy the beauty during the nights. You can combine the purposes of both aesthetics and security with proper illumination. It is always advisable to have subdued lighting in the garden to elevate its features. Use flood-lights to up-light trees and shrubs, bollard or mushroom lamps to throw light on pathways and steps and spot-lights with a narrow beam to focus the important garden features. You can create good effects by back lighting to illuminate walls and fences, diffused lighting which uses



translucent screens to soften and mute harsh light and down-lighting to mimic the natural light. While designing the illumination, see that only the effect of the light is felt and never reveal the source of the lighting.

Planting

Choose good quality plant material from the nursery as per the requirement. Harden the plants by exposing to the garden situation to avoid post-planting shock, especially if the plants are brought from an outside location, or removed from the old nursery bed. Mimic the arrangement of the plants before taking up actual planting. Consider the height and spread required for different plants upon maturity. Remember to leave room to access your plants for maintenance. While planting take enough care not to disturb the root ball and not to expose the

roots over-ground. By placing components like ceramic pots, weathered rocks, water fountains, sculptures and other ornaments in right place, you can elevate the beauty of the garden. Paint the hard landscape elements like arbours, kerbs and gazebos with appropriate colour to improve the appearance. Mulch with pebbles or wood shavings not only serves the purpose of aesthetics and definition but also helps in retaining the moisture. After all the works are finished, perform final trimming, clean-up and prepare a maintenance schedule.
(Next week: Garden maintenance)
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REAL ESTATE

City realty sees corrections in several locations: report

Cushman & Wakefield India's latest report describes Hyderabad as largely an end-user driven market due to which it is sensitive to rapid price rise forcing developers to keep values in check. A look by T.LALITH SINGH

It was bound to happen. And this is what the industry seniors vainly tried to emphasize on during real estate boom in the city. While the property prices climbed steeply, some had the insight to suggest that the price rise was rather 'unscientific' and would have to correct itself somewhere down the line. The Cushman & Wakefield India's latest report in a way underscores this when it points out that the residential market has seen a rise in capital values in most micro-markets across major cities in the country while Hyderabad was the only city which recorded corrections in a number of locations. According to the report, the corrections recorded here ranged between -2 per cent to -4 per cent in a number of locations. This is in contrast to most major cities, where there was an average price increase of 10 per cent (year-to-year) in mid-properties and the high-end properties grew by 12 per cent during the same period.

In the city, select micro-markets such as East and West Marredpally and Begumpet/Somajiguda witnessed a marginal correction of 2 per cent and at the same time, Kompally recorded 4 per cent correction in prices, owing to moderation in demand.

As some in the industry kept on reiterating, the rush of the boom had developers trying to spread wings all over without a proper and thorough understanding of the prospects of an area and also the demand of the buyers. Some of the right locations did continue to show a growth in the city which could be seen from price appreciation there.

The Cushman & Wakefield report describes the mid-market of Madhapur and Nizampet as a few markets with recordable increase in values put at 7 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. Both the high and mid-end in Banjara Hills and also the mid-end in Kukatpally registered an increase in the range of 1 per cent to 2 per cent in the market, it says.

The capital appreciation however was mainly attributed to proximity of commercial locations and relatively lower price points.

The report describes Hyderabad as largely end-user driven market due to which it is sensitive to rapid price rise forcing developers to keep values in check. "However in the last few months, demand from non-residents has also been slow on account of economic slowdown in global markets further affecting demand for residential properties in the market," it points out.

At the same time, the peripheral and suburban markets witnessed correction due to this slowdown in demand as these markets have been over supplied in relevance to current demand scenario.

"Developers have consciously reinvented themselves, by launching new projects, which would appeal to customers in the current economic environment and sentiments," says Sanjay Dutt, Executive Managing Director, South Asia, Cushman & Wakefield.

Micro-market	Category	4Q 2012 average capital values (Rs. per sft)	1 year ago (% change)
Kompally	High-end	3,200-4,200	-4%
West & East Marredpally	Mid-end	2,700-3,200	-2%
Begumpet/Somajiguda	Mid-end	2,800-3,600	-2%
Madhapur/Gachibowli	Mid-end	3,000-3,800	7%

Choosing the best building blocks

Bricks made of fly ash or slag from blast furnaces are much better in many aspects. A look by NEMMANI SREEDHAR

Each time we think of venturing into constructing a house or commercial building, the main problem that most of us face is selecting the 'best' material. While most of us limit our search towards selecting better building designs, type of cement and choice of interior decoration, we tend to neglect the basic building blocks of any construction, bricks.

A walk through the local construction material vendors reveals that while we have a host of options when it comes to 'standardised' material like cement and other accessories, when it comes to the question of bricks, there hardly seems to be much of a choice.

But contrary to what the neighbourhood vendor would want us to believe, with advancing technologies, we do have a wide range of bricks available to consider from. And experts point out that it's important to choose the right kind of brick for the right kind of building.

For most, bricks usually mean the burnt clay brick, but the environmental cost of these bricks is quite high, construction material expert L. H. Rao says. Red clay bricks are made using the fertile top soil and because of this, each brick made is counter productive for the already depleting fertility of the top soil, he says.

Carbon footprint

Apart from using top soil, the burnt clay bricks also create a large carbon footprint due to the simple fact that they have to be burnt in a brick kiln, he explains. "We need fire wood to run the brick kilns and this result in creating unnecessary



BETTER OPTION: Apart from environmental benefits, the bricks made of alternative material are also better qualitatively and technologically.

carbon foot print. If we shift to using other types of bricks, like fly ash or slag based bricks, we can remove both these problems of using top soil and creating pollution," he says.

Bricks made of fly ash or slag from blast furnaces are much better in many aspects, Dr. Rao says pointing out that there is no need to burn these bricks and only pro-

cess to be followed is curing these blocks. Since both fly ash and slag are industrial by-products, there is no environmental cost to these products.

Additional benefits

Using fly ash based bricks have additional benefits too. "fly ash, when dumped in land fills, can prove to be carcinogenic as it per-

meates into the ground water table. By arresting the fly ash in the form of a brick, we can extend our help in using the otherwise harmful industrial by-product," Dr. Rao points out adding that these bricks are not carcinogenic as fly ash is restricted in the brick itself.

Apart from environmental benefits, the bricks made of alternative material are also better qualitative-

ly and technologically. "Durability and consistency apart, even the quality of these bricks is much better than the kiln burnt clay ones and they can come in custom made shapes too. Also because of the availability of hollow bricks, the final weight of the wall can be reduced by a considerable extent without affecting the strength of the wall," Dr. Rao adds.

Johnson Tiles weaves Disney magic



Disney Home has products spanning total home solutions - including furniture, bedding, rugs, tableware, fans, paints and bath accessories and Johnson Tiles is offering the Disney Bathroom concepts in seven varieties

Bringing the vibrant Disney characters to the bathrooms, H&R Johnson had launched a 'Disney branded tiles collection'. As part of this tie-up, H&R Johnson (India) will begin rolling out Disney Bathroom concepts in India.

The Disney Concepts will bring vibrant colours in new and fun styles that are inspired by the new as well as classic Disney characters, Senior General Manager - Johnson Tiles, Dinesh Vyas, said. The products are being launched from Andhra Pradesh, he said.

Market research on consumers' choices in the home lifestyle segment threw up very interesting findings. Most new buyers in the State along with young homeown-

ers prefer to renovate their homes in a way to nurture and aid the development of their children, he said.

"These new demands have created an altogether new category of design solutions, and the strategic tie-up with Walt Disney to launch the Johnson Tiles Disney collection caters to these evolving needs," Mr. Vyas points out.

Disney Home has products spanning total home solutions - including furniture, bedding, rugs, tableware, kitchenware, fans, paints and bath accessories. "We are excited to launch the Disney branded tiles in association with one of the leading ceramic tiles company in India and hope to bring Disney Magic alive for fans in

a whole new way". Managing Director, Consumer Products, Retail and Publishing, Disney UTV, Roshini Bakshi, said, during a press conference here recently.

Johnson Tiles is offering the Disney Bathroom concepts in seven varieties: A Sense of Adventure with Winnie the Pooh & Friends, Mickey & Minnie's Buds 'n' Blossoms, A Day in the Park with Mickey, Donald & Goofy, Snow White in the Summer Palace, Princesses concept featuring Cinderella, Aurora, Belle, Rapunzel, Bountiful Plenty with Mickey & Minnie and a special highlighter in the same concept. Each of these concepts consists of a set of 4 to 12 tiles and priced at Rs.3,000 to Rs.9,000 per concept.