



# THE MECHLER CORPORATION

## Landscape Architecture

### Why Hire a Landscape Architect?

In any profession there are various levels of experience and training, and the landscape design field is no exception. Unfortunately there is more confusion in this field than in any other because not everyone knows the difference between a landscape designer and a landscape architect nor what either of them does specifically.

Landscape architecture is the art of creating visually interesting and meaningful designs that provide for the client's health, safety and well being, while preserving the environment. A landscape architect is a state-licensed design professional with a degree in landscape design. Landscape architects use their technical and artistic talents to plan and design the built environment. They create drawings, construction documents, and specifications that dictate the allocation, arrangement, and construction of land elements and water resources. Practicing landscape architecture or using the title "landscape architect" without having a state license is a violation of the Landscape Architects Practice Act. Landscape architects are also trained to document design concepts and plans on paper as a visual, graphic means of communicating their designs. This is especially important for larger projects that require permitting through city planning or building departments. In addition, they are usually more experienced in the design of "hardscape" features such as swimming pools, arbors, fountains, retaining walls, and other engineered nonstructural elements. Landscape architects act as a third-party go-between between the contractor and the owner. Without any financial ties to the contractor, a landscape architect will dictate and support the quality of work that is in the owner's best interest.

Landscape designers, on the other hand, are not licensed or regulated by the state and are limited to making plans or drawings for the selection, placement, or use of plants when the execution of such plans or drawings does not affect the public health, safety, and welfare. As such, they are not required to obtain educational and/or training background. Landscape designers, garden consultants and master gardeners can advise you in their areas of expertise, but may not have experience in construction oversight, local regulations, site engineering and building techniques, as landscape architects do. Some landscape designers are very well versed in plant materials and are very capable planting designers. If a designer is tied to a construction company, it may be difficult to obtain competitive bid prices for the work to be done. As a result, the owner has no basis for comparison. Construction documents prepared by a designer may also be less thorough than those prepared by a landscape architect. This could result in some "in the field" decisions that may not be in the owner's best financial interest.

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