



15 Practical Cabin Landscaping Tips

Good landscaping adds value, privacy, and beauty to your property. Here's our 15 practical cabin landscaping tips that will enhance your getaway.



Perhaps you've decorated the inside of your cabin to the nth degree, but every time you approach your place from the outside, something seems to be missing.

The solution: Decorate it, too! With landscaping, that is. Good landscaping adds value, privacy, and beauty to your property.

First, stop thinking in urban terms. For instance, don't limit yourself to manicured garden beds

around your cabin's footings. "We don't think of them as foundation plants," says Deborah Dupree, who with her husband, Wesley Moody, owns Wesley Moody Landscaping in Saranac Lake, N.Y. "If you're in a cabin, look out in the woods and try to bring that into your yard."

Rick Stewart, a landscape designer with Stoney Creek Landscaping in Minocqua, Wis., agrees. "The one thing I find is that people don't come up here to mow the lawn."

See also [Bird-Friendly Landscape](#)



Use these 15 practical tips to improve your cabin's landscape.

- 1. Look down.** Before you do anything, have any underground utilities marked by your local officials so you don't accidentally dig into buried wires and pipes.
- 2. Look up and out.** Check the mature height and width of the trees or shrubs you want to plant. You don't want them to grow into your cabin or overhead power lines. "That's a big mistake people make," Dupree says. "They plant too close to the home."
- 3. Go natural.** Save the manicured, formal look for a city house. "We use a lot of natives or plants that look like natives," Stewart says. "We do natural landscaping, using flat boulders instead of manufactured steps. We blend it into everything that's already there so you feel like you're getting away from it all."
- 4. Design just like Mother Nature.** "Instead of planting a variety of things, like you

would in an English garden, we use more mass plantings,” Dupree says.

5. Ditch the plant list. “Oftentimes, people will come to us with a plant list,” Stewart says, “but in a designer’s eyes, we think about height and shapes more often than specific plants.” Dupree agrees: “When I look at a space, I don’t think about which plant to put there, I think: I need a medium-high tree here, I need something about 20 feet tall that’s multistemmed there.” After she envisions the look she wants, Dupree decides which plants will work.



6. Know your hardiness zone. Before you buy, check plant tags to be sure your selections can survive local conditions. Consult the USDA’s Plant Hardiness Zone Map (www.usda.gov) if you don’t know your zone. Searching “hardiness zone” yields the map and helpful articles, including one on fire-resistant plants.

7. Check for sunlight. If your cabin is parked in deep shade, don’t expect full-sun plants to grow there, and vice versa.

8. Consider maintenance. No landscape is completely without maintenance, so save time by planting native perennials, shrubs, and trees that don’t require supplemental watering and priming. But if you enjoy gardening, feel free to add containers, a vegetable garden, and mass plantings of colorful annuals.

9. Avoid the “egg” syndrome. A common mistake is placing a boulder on top of the ground. “This tends to look like an egg sitting in the yard,” Dupree says. “If you look around in the woods, you will notice that most rocks and boulders are partially buried. We also look for

boulders with moss growing on them.”

10. Add shade. If you don't already have trees on your lot, plant them on the west side of your property to shade your cabin from hot afternoon sun. On the south side, plant deciduous trees for shade in the summer and to allow passive solar warming in the winter.

See also [DIY Pathway With Natural Landscaping](#)



11. Leave some space. Log homes need at least 3 to 5 feet of air flowing between the logs and any foundation plantings to reduce mold and mildew. It also helps reduce fire risk.

12. Mulch properly. Organic mulch adds nutrients to the soil and conserves moisture, but keep wood mulch and pine straw away from your foundation; they can attract termites and shelter varmints.

13. Don't feed the deer. Many areas of the country harbor high volumes of hungry deer. Why spend big bucks on a tree they'll gnaw to the ground overnight? "They just eat everything," Dupree says. "There aren't a lot of options: fencing, spraying with repellents, and using a limited plant palette." Her company plants a lot of ferns, ornamental grasses, and 'Gro-Low' sumacs. Ask your local cooperative extension service for a list of deer-resistant plants for your area. Be warned: No plant is deer-proof.

14. Beware invasive plants. Some common landscape plants, such as barberry and burning

bush, are now considered invasive in some areas of the country. Research before you buy.

15. Go 3-D. A flat landscape can be a boring – and urban-looking – scene. “We usually build a berm with good topsoil and do several levels, often setting boulders inside them so the ground is not completely level,” Dupree says. “Then we use three different heights of plants: tall trees; mid-level shrubs, such as dogwoods or viburnums; then a ground-cover plant, such as stephanandra.” ?

ABOUT OUR AUTHOR

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