

Thrive



Landscape and construction ideas
for Delaware Valley living

Spring 2018

**McBride
Family's Yard
Transformation**

**Top 6 Outdoor
Living Options**

**Disney Vacation
Winners Revealed**



COMPLIMENTS of GASPER LANDSCAPE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Thrive

Landscape and construction
ideas for Delaware Valley living

The official magazine from Gasper Landscape Design & Construction. *Thrive* magazine is the trusted source for landscape and construction ideas for those living in the Delaware valley. Our goal is to enhance knowledge and encourage confidence, inspiring the highest quality of landscape design and outdoor living experiences.

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 **GASPER**
LANDSCAPE | CUSTOM | HOME & GARDEN
DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION | CARPENTRY | SHOWPLACE

A Deeply Rooted “Family Affair”

Family owned and operated, Gasper Landscape Design & Construction, has been making clients happy for over 30 years! It all began in 1987 when delicatessen owner Robert Gasper and his wife Paula purchased their first home in Holland, PA. Their newly-constructed home needed “curb appeal” and Bob began landscaping their property. Through word of mouth, deli customers, friends and associates asked Bob to landscape their yards, and soon sprouted a new business idea.

In 1994 the Gaspers opened their first garden center on Second Street Pike in Richboro, PA. One year later, they purchased an historic farmhouse on a nearby 7-acre property where they operated the landscape division. In 2006, Gasper Home & Garden Showplace relocated the design office and retail nursery to its current address on Tanyard Road in Richboro, PA. The rest, as they say — “is history”.

Throughout the years, Bob’s entrepreneurial vision has evolved the business into a full-service landscape build and design firm. The Gasper’s immediate (and extended) family members lend their expertise to both the Landscape and Retail divisions allowing the growing business to run seamlessly.

Today, Bob oversees the entire Gasper organization. Approximately 130 employees (crewmen, landscape designers, office and retail staff) support Bob’s vision of excellence and prove that a local neighborhood business can provide great, award-winning service.



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Spring 2018

LANDSCAPE AND CONSTRUCTION IDEAS FOR DELAWARE VALLEY LIVING

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MAILBOX | BRANCHING OUT

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FEATURE | FIRES THAT INSPIRE

Add a dramatic focal point to any patio or landscape with the warm, cozy glow of fire. Whether you enjoy evenings with the family or entertaining friends, fire extends time outdoors.

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FEATURE | POOLSIDE REVISITED

When homeowners Michael and Dawn DiGiovacchino were looking to host their son's graduation party, they knew that their back yard and pool were in need of serious renovation.

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FEATURE | OUTDOOR KITCHEN CRAZE

You will be "eating out" more often after being outfitted with all the amenities of your indoor kitchen, outdoor entertaining has never been easier and will be a breathtaking gathering spot.

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BEFORE & AFTER | PATIO REVEAL

I've had many friends and readers ask if the Smith family's patio renovation was complete. Truth be told, it was finished right before Spring arrived. I wanted to wait for the plants to start blooming.

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LANDSCAPING 101 | DESIGN PROCESS

Gasper's award-winning design team has the ability to take on any size landscape project. We will guide you through the entire design process, from initial consultation to the final reveal.



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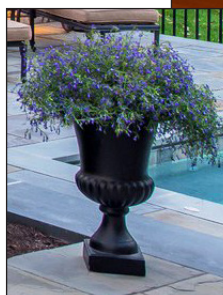
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LANDSCAPING 101

Eight rules for creating a satisfying garden that is neither fussy nor constraining



Landscape Design Principles

It's tempting, in a field as subjective as garden design, to feel that rules do not apply. However, after 28 years and hundreds of projects later, I've come to believe in certain rules and guidelines that are neither fussy nor constraining. All have proven invaluable to me over my years of garden-making. Applied by any gardener, amateur or professional, they will result in a more successful, satisfying design.

Let's start with two rules that can kick-start the process of laying out a landscape, then move on to guidelines that help in scaling the proportions of a garden's elements and, finally, to choosing and using the right plants.

1. OBEY THE "LAW" OF SIGNIFICANT ENCLOSURE

Yes, this one's a "law," not just a rule! It addresses the root meaning of garden, which is "enclosure." This, to me, is absolutely critical in creating a sense of refuge and of feeling oneself within nature's embrace. The law of significant enclosure says that we feel enclosed when the vertical edge of a space is at least one-third the length of the horizontal space we're inhabiting. Probably derived from behavioral psychology studies, this rule came to me from a professor in graduate school, and it was one of the best things I learned. Just yesterday, as I was starting the design of a patio that I wanted to separate from an adjacent play area, it gave me instant guidance for how tall a hedge I would need: the area was 17 feet wide, and so my hedge should be at least 6 feet. Sit near a tree in the park, or a wall, and gradually edge away, and you'll see how it works. Of course, there are times when the point of a landscape design is a monumental sense

of scale or view, but the best gardens, whatever their size, modulate a feeling of enclosure and openness, and this rule will help.

2. FOLLOW THE REGULATING LINE

My formal architectural education also introduced me to the concept of the "regulating line." The idea is that an element of architecture (for example, a doorway, or a building edge, even a window mullion) or a distinctive landscape feature (prominent tree, existing pool, property boundary) can "generate" an imaginary line that helps connect and organize the design. For example, in laying out one backyard, I projected the lines of its building addition into the garden space and then aligned the swimming pool and wooden walkway with those lines. The result is orderly and cohesive, even after being softened with planting. "A regulating line," wrote the great architect (and theoretician) Le Corbusier, "is an assurance against capriciousness—It confers on the work the quality of rhythm—The choice of a regulating line fixes the fundamental geometry of the work."

Le Corbusier hits on the two aspects (a bit paradoxical, perhaps) that make the regulating line so valuable. First is the idea of underlying order: that the garden, for all its naturalness, or wildness, is founded on strong principles—what's sometimes known in garden circles as "good bones." Second, that regulating lines—at least as I employ them—are subjective; it's the designer who identifies and manipulates them to create the garden. And I'd say that the use of the regulating line, more than any other concept, separates professional from amateur design.

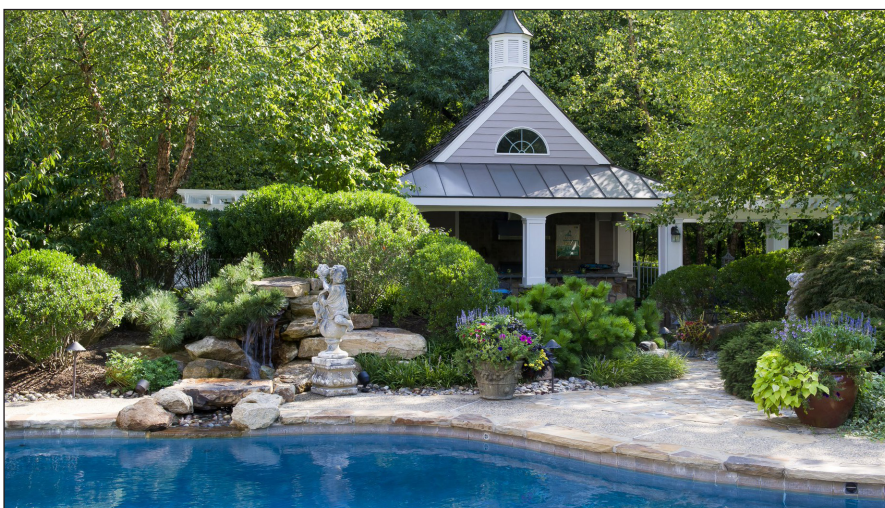


3. USE THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE TO GET PROPORTIONS RIGHT

Certain rules help us refine design. One is the Golden Ratio which is a ratio of proportion that's been observed in everything from the Great Pyramids at Giza to the Greek Parthenon and has been used throughout history as a guide to a pleasing sense of balance and order. The practical application that I make of the Golden Ratio involves its sibling, the Golden Rectangle, in which the ratio of the short side to the long side is equal to the ratio of the long side to the sum of both sides ($a/b = b/a+b$)—you probably didn't know that landscape architects had to learn math. Numerically, the



Dennis Shane photography



Dennis Shane photography

BEAUTY REST

It goes without saying that the finished project more than exceeded the homeowner's expectations. The work ethic and attention to detail exhibited by Gasper's forman and crew made the DiGiovacchino's so comfortable they went on vacation.

MODEL HOME

The level of quality didn't stop at the design phase but continued with every step of the process. By providing dimensional models in addition to detailed plans, Gasper is able to help clients visualize the design ideas which allows for immediate feedback.

Golden Rectangle ratio is close to 1: 1.6, a proportion I regularly use to lay out terraces, patios, arbors, and lawns. The raised beds in my vegetable garden are 5 by 8 feet. It's a rectangular proportion that always looks good—they don't call it golden for nothing!

4. TURN TO THOMAS D. CHURCH WHEN DESIGNING STEPS

Another ratio may even be platinum: That's what I've always called the rule for step design advocated by landscape architect Thomas D. Church, often credited with creating the California style. Laid out in his seminal work *Gardens Are for People*, it says simply that twice the height of the riser plus the tread should equal 26 inches. That means that if the riser is 5 inches, the tread (what you walk on) should be 16 inches. All I can say is that the rule is true, and I've used it from steep canyon faces to gentle changes of patio levels. A useful corollary states that 5 feet is the minimum width for two people climbing steps side by side.

5. SIZE MATTERS

A final rule related to scale and the sculpting of space is this: Go big. Faced with a decision to make a staircase wider or narrower, a pool longer or shorter, a pergola higher or lower, the answer is almost always the former. In my own garden, I remember laying out an arbor, with its posts 10 feet high, and listening to trusted friends wondering

whether it wasn't "a little too tall." Thankfully I stuck to my guns, and some 18 years later, wreathed in wisteria and anchored at the ground by clusters of pots, the arbor seems just right.

6. PLANT BIG TO SMALL

It's with plants, probably more than any other element of gardens, that the infinite variation and fickleness of nature is most evident—and so perhaps, they are the trickiest to prescribe rules for. And yet, successful planting is the crowning touch of a garden. Three rules have always served me well.

First, is to plant big to small: start with trees, then shrubs, then perennials, then ground cover. This is important not only in a compositional way (seeing the bigger forms first gives a better sense of the overall structure), but in a completely practical sense. Setting a big tree may require machinery or at least multiple gardeners and ample space for maneuvering and stationing amendments and soils; it would be sad to damage or undo some newly planted bed. This seems so obvious, but for lots of gardeners (the author included) a block of fresh perennials may be impossible to avoid planting right away. Be strong; resist the temptation.

7. PLANT IN MASSES

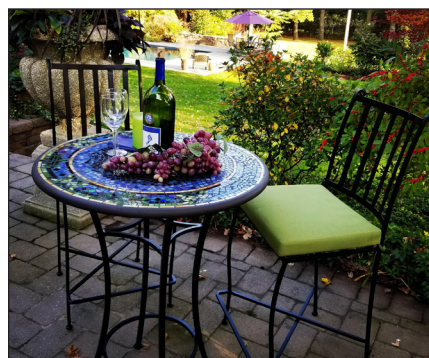
While there is much to be said for the cottage garden, with a rich array of varied planting (indeed, it's the real

master gardener who can pull this off), there is a power to seeing a quantity of one plant that is genuinely affecting. Russell Page, one of the great twentieth-century landscape designers said it well: "the most striking and satisfying visual pleasure comes from the repetition or the massing of one simple element. Imagine the Parthenon with each column a different kind of marble!"

I remember as a beginning garden designer in California being taken aside by my mentor, a transplanted Englishwoman who owned the nursery, walking through a vast block of salvia, and being told that I could, if I liked, use 30 of them—not the three or five I'd typically been planting. It was a liberating moment.

8. REMEMBER THIS ABOVE ALL

Maybe my favorite rule of all time, all the more charming for its need to be adjusted for inflation: It's better to plant a 50-cent plant in a \$5 hole, than a \$5 plant in a 50-cent hole. Imparted by Ralph Snodsmith, my first official gardening teacher at the New York Botanical Garden and talk radio host (a character whose working uniform was always a forest green three-piece suit), there is no greater planting wisdom. No matter how brilliant a plan one conceives, if the plants are not well planted—at the right height, in a sufficiently sized, and properly amended pit—the results will likely be poor. Some rules just can't be broken. 🌿



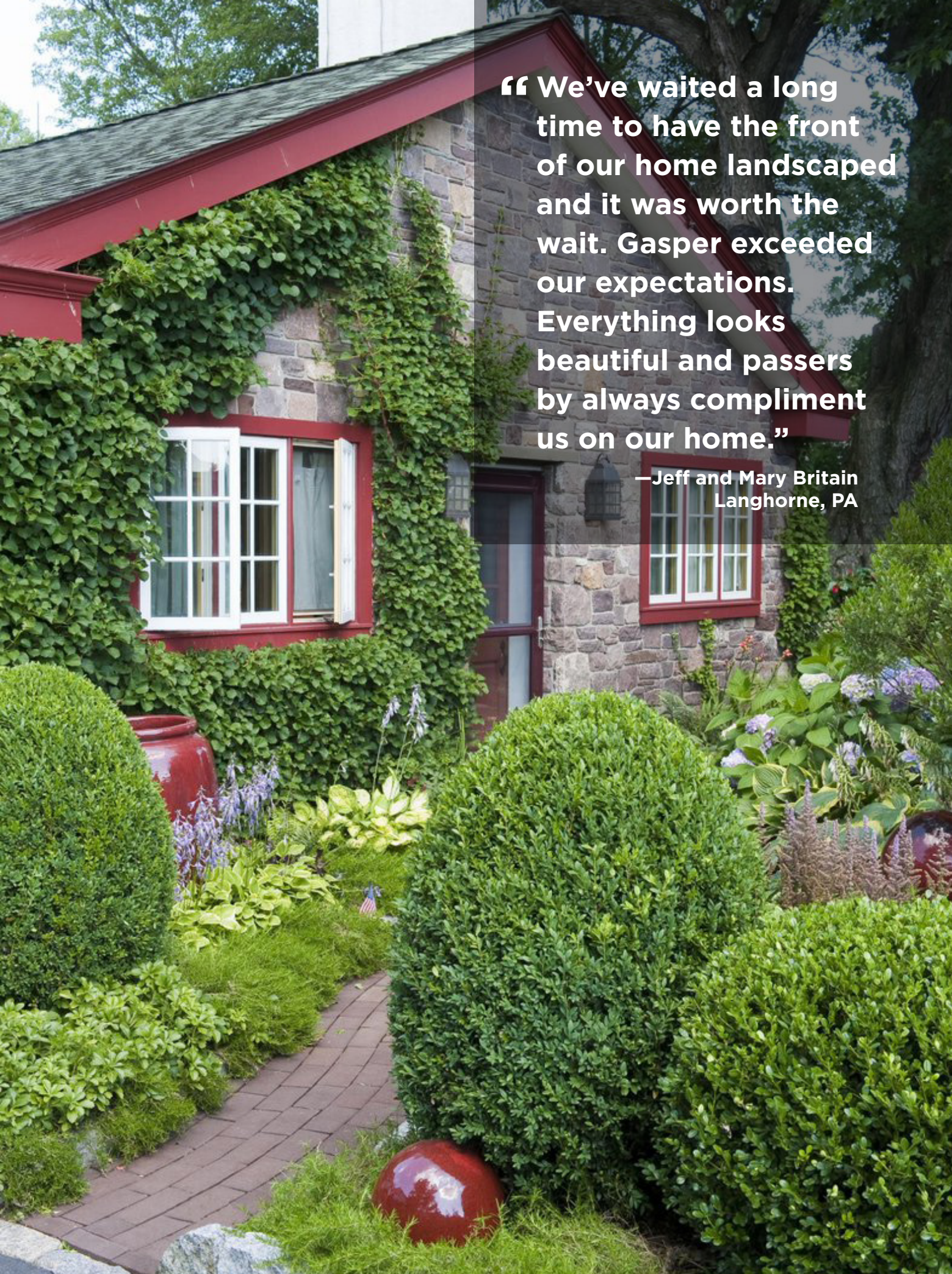
Dennis Shane photography

EATING OUT

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Dennis Shane photography



“ We’ve waited a long time to have the front of our home landscaped and it was worth the wait. Gasper exceeded our expectations. Everything looks beautiful and passers by always compliment us on our home.”

**—Jeff and Mary Britain
Langhorne, PA**