



CHARLOTTESVILLE VIRGINIA · SINCE 1912

The Estate Landscape Planning Guide

Design principles, plant lists, budget benchmarks, and maintenance schedules for Central Virginia properties.

FROM 113 YEARS OF SNOW FAMILY EXPERTISE

From Corbin Snow



The original Snow's business card, c. 1940s — Phone 1630.

When my great-grandfather Leroy started Snow's on Carlton Avenue in 1912, the work was simple: grow good plants, sell them honest, plant them where they'd thrive. Five generations later the work has gotten more complicated — pools, outdoor kitchens, drone surveys, 3D renderings — but the way we approach a property hasn't.

A landscape isn't a one-weekend project, and the best ones aren't the ones with the biggest price tag. They're the ones where every choice fits the house, the family, and the way the land wants to behave. That takes a real plan.

This guide is the plan we share with our own clients before we sketch a single stone wall. It covers the eight design principles we use on every property, the plants that actually thrive in our soil and climate, what a project really costs at each scope, and the seasonal schedule that keeps a finished landscape looking the way it did in year one.

If you read it cover to cover and decide to do the work yourself, that's a win for us too — we've been answering Saturday-morning gardening questions on WCHV since 1942 and we don't plan on stopping. If you'd like our team to help, we're always glad to walk a property and talk it through. No commitment, no fee.

Thanks for letting us in.

Corbin Snow

Owner & President · Fifth Generation

FIVE GENERATIONS

One family, one Charlottesville address, one hundred and thirteen years.

From a market garden on Carlton Avenue in 1912 to a seven-acre nursery and design-build firm at 1875 Avon Street Extended — the work has changed shape but never changed hands.

5

GENERATIONS

113

YEARS IN
BUSINESS

50,000

PROJECTS
INSTALLED

\$250M+

IN LANDSCAPES
BUILT

2008 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE COMPANY OF THE YEAR · LAWN & LANDSCAPE
MAGAZINE



THE PROCESS

How an estate landscape actually gets planned

A patchwork of contractors and weekend projects almost always costs more in the long run than a single coordinated plan. The good news: planning a property is a defined process with a beginning, middle, and end.

01 The site walk

We walk the property with you — looking at what's there, what's missing, where the sun moves, where water collects, what the house wants to be looking at.

02 The vision interview

What does life on this property look like in five years? Where do you eat dinner outside, where do the dogs run, where do you read on a Sunday? The plan answers those before it answers what plants go where.

03 The 3D design

A scale plan plus 3D renderings — you see the patio, the wall, the pool surround, the trees at five-year maturity, before any soil is moved. Design fees range from \$500 to \$3,500, credited back against installation.

04 The phased install

Estate projects rarely happen all at once. We sequence the work so the property looks finished at the end of every phase — and so heavy equipment never comes back through a planted bed.

05 The handoff

A walkthrough and a maintenance plan. We tell you which plants need what when, set up irrigation schedules, and leave you a binder with everything we installed and where it came from.

Eight design principles we use on every property



01

The architecture leads

A landscape is a frame for a house, not a costume on top of one. A 1900s farmhouse asks for boxwood, gravel, and split-rail. A modern build asks for limestone slabs and ornamental grasses. When the plants and the architecture argue, the architecture wins.



02

Long sight lines, then garden rooms

A great property reveals itself in pieces. From the drive, you should see one big move — an allée, a meadow, a pool reflecting the house. Once inside the landscape, the rooms get smaller and more intimate. Long view to short view is the rhythm.



03

Native bones, ornamental highlights

Roughly 60% of the planting should be species native to the Piedmont or the Blue Ridge — they handle our clay, our humidity, and our deer. The remaining 40% is where you spend on specimen Japanese maples, peonies, and the boxwood parterre.



04

Stone and water as anchors

A piece of stone or a still water feature gives the eye somewhere to land. They're permanent, they read in winter when everything else is asleep, and they age in a way concrete never will. One real stone moment beats five decorative ones.



05

Year-round structure

Plan for January first, May second. If the bones (evergreens, walls, terraces, specimen trees) work in winter, the spring blooms are a bonus. If the bones rely on annuals to look like anything, the property looks bare four months of the year.



06

Approach and arrival

The first 30 seconds — drive, gate, walk to the front door — are 80% of the impression. Outsized investment here pays back. Spend less on the back hedge.



07

Rooms with a purpose

Every outdoor space should answer a question: where do we cook, where do we sit by the fire, where do the kids play, where do we eat dinner. A patio without a use is a patio nobody sits on.



08

The 60-30-10 plant rule

Of any planted area: roughly 60% should be one or two unifying species (boxwood, inkberry, a native grass), 30% should be a secondary supporting cast, and 10% should be the loud specimens that draw the eye. Amateur plantings invert this and look chaotic.



THE PLANT PALETTE

What actually thrives in our zone

Charlottesville sits at the boundary of USDA Zone 7a/7b – clay-heavy soil, humid summers, cold-but-not-arctic winters, and serious deer pressure outside town. The plants below are the ones we install over and over because they hold up.

Anchor trees (15-30 year vision)

Willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) – heritage scale, fast for an oak

River birch (*Betula nigra 'Heritage'*) – cinnamon bark, handles wet feet

Yoshino cherry (*Prunus × yedoensis*) – the Charlottesville spring icon

Ginkgo 'Princeton Sentry' – male only, no fruit, neon-yellow fall

Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) – drops needles, feathery

Tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) – Virginia's state tree

Foundation evergreens

Boxwood 'Green Velvet' – blight-resistant, holds shape, classic

Inkberry holly 'Strongbox' – boxwood replacement where blight is a concern

Soft-touch holly (*Ilex crenata*) – finer texture for modern architecture

Dwarf cedar 'Hetz Midget' – rare slow grower for tight foundations

Specimen trees (focal points)

Japanese maple 'Bloodgood' – burgundy through summer, scarlet in fall

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) – anthracnose-resistant cultivars only

Saucer magnolia (*Magnolia × soulangeana*) – the showstopper March bloom

Crepe myrtle 'Natchez' – white bloom, exfoliating bark, 30' tree form

Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) – late-summer bloom, brilliant fall

Native pollinator workhorses

Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) – every estate should have a drift

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'*) – bulletproof

Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*) – 5' tall, butterfly magnet

New England aster – fall pollinator anchor

Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) – quiet workhorse, deer-proof

Pollinators, deer-proof choices, and what we won't plant

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Plants we won't recommend

Leyland cypress – fast then dead – bagworms and canker shorten life to ~15 years

Bradford pear – invasive, splits in storms, prohibited from sale in Virginia

English ivy as groundcover – invasive, climbs trees, kills them

Burning bush – invasive in our forests

Tulips – deer dessert; spend the bulb budget on daffodils instead

Deer-resistant standouts

Russian sage (*Perovskia*) – silver foliage, blue bloom, tough

Catmint 'Walker's Low' – long bloom, soft, low-maintenance edge

Lambs ear (*Stachys byzantina*) – children pet it, deer ignore it

Daffodils – every spring bulb should be a daffodil, not a tulip

Allium – architectural, deer-proof, 3-week bloom window



BUDGET

What an estate landscape really costs

Project budgets are honest — we'd rather quote you a real number than win the work and surprise you. Here's how to think about scope, with the ranges we see across our installs.

SCOPE	RANGE	WHAT IT INCLUDES
Garden refresh	\$2K–\$10K	Bed cleanup, mulching, single-bed planting, edging, plant replacement. Maintenance-grade work, not design.
Landscape design phase	\$10K–\$50K	One area transformed end-to-end — front entry, a single garden room, a small terrace, mature-plant install for a defined space.
Full property transformation	\$50K–\$150K	Multiple zones, hardscape + plantings + lighting + irrigation, designed and installed as one coordinated project.
Estate master plan	\$150K+	Multi-phase property — drive sequence, pool surround, multiple terraces, large hardscape, mature specimens, lighting and water. Designed across years.

What drives a number up

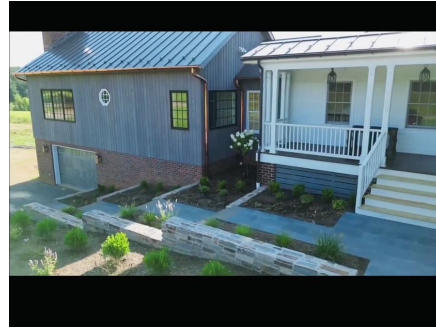
Mature plant material (a 14-foot Yoshino vs. 6-foot is 8× the cost), natural stone over manufactured pavers, site-access difficulty, permit-bound work, and irrigation or lighting infrastructure.

What keeps it reasonable

Phasing, choosing the right tier of stone, fall install windows over May, and right-sized plant material that grows into the design.

Stone, surfaces, and outdoor rooms

A pool is a frame. The surround is the picture. Spending the equivalent of 30–50% of the pool budget on the surround is the right ratio – and the materials below are what we install most often in Central Virginia.



Patios & terraces

Pennsylvania bluestone – the regional default. Honed for formal, natural cleft for casual. Holds up to ice melt.

Tennessee crab orchard sandstone – warmer tones, beautiful with brick.

Manufactured pavers – Techo-Bloc, Belgard. Best when budget matters or modular pattern is the look.

Porcelain pavers – modern projects, pool decks, refuses to stain.

Walls

Sunrise Mountain wallstone – warm gold-tone, our most-installed wall stone.

Weatherface fieldstone – naturalistic, mossy gray, dry-stacked or mortared.

Maple Creek & Pocono Blend – denser blue-gray for modern work.

Belgian block – driveway aprons, garden edges. Centuries-old technique, never goes out.

Pool surrounds

We don't build pools. We partner with the right pool contractor.

The surround is our work – coping, deck, kitchen, fire pit, plantings.

Coping options – bluestone, travertine, porcelain, natural-cleft sandstone.

Outdoor kitchen – cast-stone or stacked-stone base, granite or porcelain top.

Lighting principle: path lights (low, downcast, 2700K) plus accent uplights on specimen trees and walls – never on the house facade. Layer warm and dim on dimmable transformers; most over-lit landscapes have one circuit on full bright.

THE WORK

Five projects we're proud of.

Real properties, real homeowners, real budgets. Each one started the same way: a walk through the property, a conversation about how the family wanted to live in it, and a plan that respected the architecture.

HILLSIDE · FARMHOUSE · MODERN · CONSTITUTION FARM ·
WESTERN ALBEMARLE



CROZET · ALBEMARLE COUNTY

Hillside Patio Transformation

Scope. 1,200-sf bluestone patio, 60' of dry-stacked stone retaining wall, and timber-step terraces behind an established home on a steep hillside lot.

The retaining-wall system terraced a slope nobody thought was usable — and solved an 8-year wet-basement problem along the way.

WHAT WE USED

Pennsylvania bluestone · Weatherface fieldstone · pressure-treated timber · 57's gravel base · low-voltage path lighting



ALBEMARLE COUNTY

1800s Farmhouse Pool & New Addition

Scope. New pool (partner contractor) with full Snow Knows surround. Period-appropriate plantings around an 1800s farmhouse and modern addition. Plan, 3D renderings, and drone documentation.

Two architectures — old and new — share one continuous landscape. Restraint in the planting palette did the heavy lifting.

WHAT WE USED

Pennsylvania bluestone coping · Sunrise Mountain wallstone · boxwood and dwarf hydrangea · period-appropriate boxwood parterre · accent uplighting



SOUTHERN ALBEMARLE

Modern Farmhouse Outdoor Living

Scope. Porcelain-paver patio, full outdoor kitchen, and a curved stone fire pit set on an axis with the Blue Ridge.

A single curve in the fire-pit wall holds the whole composition together. Precision matters at this scale.

WHAT WE USED

Porcelain pavers · Maple Creek wallstone · cast-stone outdoor kitchen with granite top · stainless built-in grill · gas fire pit with linear burner



SCOTTSVILLE · IN PROGRESS

Constitution Farm

Scope. Williamsburg-style brick parterre and full restoration of a 19th-century estate landscape. Multi-year, multi-phase, with historical research informing every move.

Period photos and a Colonial Williamsburg consult led the design — we rebuilt rather than reimagined.

WHAT WE USED

Reclaimed brick parterre · Belgian block edging · period-appropriate boxwood and clipped yew · pea gravel paths · cast-stone urns



WESTERN ALBEMARLE · NEW BUILD

Dream Backyard Estate Package

Scope. Multi-tier stone retaining walls, porcelain pool deck, custom fire pit, and zoned turf-and-bed system on a sloped new-construction estate.

The slope was the problem and the answer. Three tiers of wall created three usable terraces; without them, half the yard would be unwalkable.

WHAT WE USED

Pocono Blend wallstone · porcelain pool deck · custom fire pit with stone surround · zoyzia turf · Belgian block driveway accents · low-voltage landscape lighting



MAINTENANCE

A year on a Central Virginia estate

A finished landscape needs deliberate care. Here's the rhythm we follow on every property we maintain — and the schedule we'd recommend you keep if you maintain it yourself.

JANUARY

Dormant pruning of shade trees and ornamentals. Send soil samples to Virginia Cooperative Extension. Review last year's plan, plan additions.

MARCH

First pre-emergent for crabgrass when forsythia blooms. Cut back perennials and ornamental grasses. Edge beds, top-dress with mulch.

MAY

Deadhead spring bulbs (let foliage yellow naturally). Plant warm-season annuals after last frost (~May 5 for Charlottesville). Mulch any beds not yet topped.

JULY

Hold the watering schedule. Deadhead echinacea, shasta, salvia. Pinch fall mums. No fertilizing turf in heat.

SEPTEMBER

Cool-season turf overseed. Best month for transplanting woody material. Divide perennials. Plant fall bulbs late month.

NOVEMBER

Wrap young tree trunks against deer rub. Drain irrigation. Cut back perennials (or leave for winter interest and pollinator habitat — both are valid).

FEBRUARY

Continue pruning. Apply dormant horticultural oil to roses, fruit trees, and known scale-prone shrubs. Order mulch.

APRIL

Planting window opens — install woody material. Sharpen tools. Aerate cool-season turf areas. First fertilizer pass on cool-season lawn.

JUNE

Establish deep-watering schedule (1" per week, mornings). Begin pest scouting — Japanese beetle pressure peaks. Prune spring-flowering shrubs after bloom.

AUGUST

Continue deadheading. Order fall bulbs (allium, daffodil, hyacinth). Plan fall planting list.

OCTOBER

Big leaf cleanup begins. Last cool-season fertilizer pass. Plant trees, shrubs, perennials — fall is the best planting window of the year.

DECEMBER

Rest. Make a list. Order seeds and bare-root for January arrival. Walk the property in low light — winter structure honestly tells you what's working.



WHERE WE FIT

What we do, and what we don't

What we do

- Estate landscape architecture and design
- Hardscape construction – patios, walls, steps, fire pits, outdoor kitchens
- Pool surrounds – coping, decks, plantings, fire and water features
- Plants, trees, and native gardens
- Seasonal garden maintenance – spring/fall cleanups, pruning, edging, mulching
- Commercial landscape installations
- The retail garden center on Avon Street – open Mon–Sat 8–5

What we don't

- Pool construction itself – we partner with pool contractors
- Weekly mowing or year-round lawn-care contracts
- Permit and engineering work – we'll bring in the engineer or surveyor when it's needed
- Tree removal beyond what's necessary for our installs
- Snow removal (despite the name)

Our service area

Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Crozet, Keswick, Farmington, Glenmore, Ednam, Earlysville, Free Union, Ivy, Scottsville, North Garden, Lake Monticello, Fluvanna County, Waynesboro, and Staunton. We'll travel further on the right project.



Snow Knows Outdoor Living

Snow's Garden Center

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snowknows.com

Mon–Saturday 8–5 · Closed Sundays

FIVE GENERATIONS OF VIRGINIA LANDSCAPERS