

# The Mastery of Design

## by Turner Tree & Landscape

Everyone who comes to Florida has a vision of a tropical paradise—a place where one can relax and watch the sunset on the water every evening. Developer **Tim Morris** has created this oasis right here in Sarasota. His Florida home has incorporated all the beauty of the environment, with its stunning Spanish architecture and long windows. It celebrates the heritage of the area and perfectly frames the water and the afternoon sun each day. It has the flavor of an isolated retreat set in a lovely old Sarasota neighborhood, against the backdrop of the setting sun. It is a snapshot from a Mediterranean villa, has timeless charm that is reflected in the architecture and the carefully selected landscape.

The landscape was chosen and carefully placed, and it required an architect's trained eye to perfectly frame the home. The landscape is like the setting—designed to set off the brilliance of a perfectly cut stone. It creates the ambiance and feeling of a faraway location.

Finely crafted landscape can make the most of your home's features. There are a number of elements in creating a

landscape to enhance a residence. The first is knowledge; the landscape architect is a crucial part of the planning process. A professional landscape architect can take your vision and make it a reality. A landscape architect combines all the elements of planning a landscape and can help you navigate obstacles. Sarasota

landscape architect, **Larry Washmuth of Stewart-Washmuth, Inc.**, stresses the key elements to be addressed when beginning a new project. First, assess what you have to work with and what you are trying to achieve. Establishing existing constraints such as seawalls, drainage issues and existing structures helps define parameters and determine realistic choices. Determine what your goals are in terms of outdoor living space in order to make the features you want to give your home become a reality.

The architect will help design a plan that will take into account the architecture of the home and make the landscape an extension of it. Understanding which plants



will thrive and where is crucial in the planting selection for any landscape project.

The Morris residence presented unique elements. There were existing structures, water front and an established neighborhood to consider. Designing a landscape that flowed with the existing neighborhood and highlighted the stunning architecture of the home itself was challenging, but exhilarating. Tree heights had to be considered because of the established trees in the neighborhood as well as the height of the home itself. The structural extensions to the home, such as the guesthouse, pool and walkways, were a big part of the landscape decisions chosen to create a feeling of unity throughout the property.

The landscape architect chosen for the project was **Rebecca Connable of Krent Wieland Design, Inc.**, in Lake Worth, Florida. She describes some of the determining factors in creating this design: "When we were approached to



Photography by Summer Bentley



work on this custom residence, the owner had several concerns. The landscaping in the rear yard had been seriously damaged due to salt-water wave action during a hurricane, so the owner wanted to make sure that the plant palette would be more robust."

Additionally, one of their main concerns was the discrepancy between the size of the main house and the existing plant material. Ms. Conable worked to help make the house feel "at home" in the neighborhood by installing large plant material to make the property proportional to its neighbors. "We selected *Phoenix dactylifera* "Medjool"

date palms for the entry court, for both the height and for their tolerance to the cold weather and high winds. We added several specimen Live Oak trees to increase the canopy around the house and tie it in to the neighborhood. We kept an existing grove of Washingtonia palms, but we under planted them with *Ligustrum lucidum* to enhance the separation between the main house and the guest cottage."

down the plant material with fresh water as quickly as possible after any storms to minimize salt-burn. We also enhanced the main house pool area with additional paving and formal plantings, while the guesthouse plantings were more tropical and resort-like, with a play "beach" instead of traditional sod."

Working closely with the landscape architect, the landscape contractor takes the design and makes it a reality. From



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The waterfront location posed its own set of issues for the landscape designer. "In the rear, the sea wall was raised and capped and the riprap barrier was refurbished to help with future wave action. We selected a salt tolerant plant palette and advised the owner to rinse

blueprint to your backyard, the landscape contractor locates the landscape material required for the project (from trees and shrubs to retaining walls), meets the specifications provided, and places the trees and plants for the architect.

As with any project, there are elements which make it unique. On the Morris Residence installation, **Jay Andrews, General Manager of Turner Tree and Landscape**, particularly remembers the pool area design. "We had to crane in the Medjool palms that surround the pool area in order to place the size palms required. We worked around the existing structure of the guest house that was under renovation. It made for an interesting day." The end result was worth it. The pool area provides a wonderful palm shaded oasis, perfect for entertaining a large group or for quiet reflection and peace.

It is important to plan your landscape project as carefully as you would your home. Hiring a landscape architect and finding a landscape contractor for your dream home will provide you with the knowledge and design for landscape that will be the perfect setting for your residential retreat, your own very paradise.

