

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides landscape design and construction in Mount Prospect. Use these planning questions to prepare a project conversation.

The surface toolbox: grading and catch basins

Surface solutions shine where water is visible and concentrated. They also integrate well with driveway design. A trench drain across the mouth of a sloped concrete driveway can intercept sheet flow and keep a garage dry. For aesthetic spaces, narrow slot drains do the job without breaking the look of a stone walkway or flagstone walkway.

French drains, explained without the myths

A French drain is a trench that collects subsurface water and moves it elsewhere. The classic build is a geotextile-lined trench, several inches of washed stone, a perforated pipe set low and pitched, more stone on top, and fabric wrapped to keep fines out before backfilling or sodding. When done right, it doesn't need a sock on the pipe because the trench fabric is the filter. When done wrong, it becomes a clogged, expensive scar.

Backfill choices matter. Washed angular stone creates voids, allowing water to move freely. Round pea gravel compacts and slows flow. Use a non-woven geotextile designed for subsurface drainage, not generic plastic sheet. Plastic traps water and creates anaerobic stink trenches. Fabric lets water in and keeps fines out. Avoid adding a thin layer of topsoil directly over clean stone without fabric, which will leach into the rock and clog it over time.

When to choose permeable pavers

Hardscape surfaces can act like sponges if you build them to do so. Permeable pavers and permeable driveway pavers sit on a deep, open-graded stone base that stores stormwater beneath the surface. The joints are filled with small aggregate, which lets water fall through. This is not a filter for mud. It is a tool for clean catchment. If you have bare soil washing across a driveway, permeable pavers will clog. If you have a tree-lined, stable yard and need to meet water management goals, they can be outstanding.

Downspouts and sump pumps: low-hanging fruit

Sump pump discharges deserve the same respect. Discharging next to the foundation just recycles water. Run them through solid pipe to daylight, a storm tap if legal, or a remote dry well with overflow. Include a check valve and an accessible union for service. In climates where lines can freeze, bury them below frost depth or add a relief outlet protected with a small gravel pit near the foundation so the pump has a place to send water if the main run is blocked.

Where landscaping and drainage meet

If you are renovating more broadly, it's smart to look at the whole property. How to come up with a landscape plan that respects water? First, map hard surfaces and roof areas. Second, sketch desired circulation, like a garden <https://trentonztid667.bearsfanteamshop.com/outdoor-lighting-design-safety-security-and-nighttime-drama> path or stepping stones, and where you want dry foot travel during storms. Third, assign zones for planting and lawn based on sun and drainage. Fourth, decide where water will leave each zone. Only then choose materials.

This approach keeps the order of operations clean and avoids ripping out a new paver driveway to add a forgotten pipe.

DIY vs hiring a professional

Is a landscaping company a good idea for drainage? If you have multiple issues, a seasoned company that offers drainage solutions, walkway installation, and planting design can coordinate all the pieces, and that coordination is worth money. Are landscaping companies worth the cost for drainage projects? When the work touches your foundation, driveway installation, or complex grading, paying for experience prevents expensive mistakes. The benefits of hiring a professional landscaper include access to equipment, knowledge of local code for curb cuts and storm connections, and the ability to design systems that serve both function and aesthetics.

If you do hire out, how do you choose a good landscape designer or contractor? Ask for projects similar in scope, not just pretty photos of patios. A good pro walks you through where water starts and ends, shows pitch on a level, and explains maintenance. What to ask a landscape contractor? Where will the water discharge, what is the slope in the pipe, what fabric and stone are you using, how will you protect existing irrigation, and what is included in restoration. What to expect when hiring a landscaper for drainage: utility locates, a clear plan for spoil handling, and a schedule that leaves your yard functional each day, not a maze of open trenches.

Should you spend money on landscaping that doesn't look like landscaping, such as buried pipe? If you care about long-term value, yes. What landscaping adds the most value to a home often starts with what keeps the home sound: dry basements, stable entries, and usable yard space. A well-drained site also supports the visible upgrades like outdoor lighting, perennial gardens, and a clean driveway design, so the payoff is both protective and aesthetic.

Two quick checklists for planning and install

Planning your system: identify water sources, confirm soil type with a simple hand test or infiltration test, choose a discharge point with legal clearance, sketch slope paths, and size components to the volume you expect. Installation day essentials: non-woven fabric sized for trenches, washed angular stone, smooth-wall pipe with the right fittings, laser or level for checking slope, and a plan for restoration including sod or seed, mulch, and edging.

Maintenance and seasons

Everything that moves water collects debris. Schedule a fall cleanup that includes clearing leaves from grates, popping open emitters to rinse, checking for sediment in catch basins, and vacuuming permeable paver joints if the surface films. After winter, inspect for frost heave at basins and adjust as needed. If your irrigation system runs, update the controller to skip cycles after rain. A smart irrigation controller pays for itself quickly on heavy soils, cutting off unnecessary watering that turns firm ground to mush.

What is the best time of year to do drainage and related landscaping? Fall and early spring are excellent. Soils are moist but workable, temperatures are friendly, and lawn repair takes quickly. In hot summers, trench restoration struggles. In frozen conditions, trenching is difficult and compaction suffers. When tying work to larger outdoor renovation plans, plan drainage first, then hardscape, then planting.

The bigger picture: resilient landscapes

There are trade-offs at every turn. A deep French drain solves a side yard problem but may be more invasive than a shallow surface swale paired with ground covers. A dry well is tidy but demands the right soil and overflow. Permeable pavers deliver function and look great, but they expect periodic maintenance to hold infiltration. The best solution is the one that aligns with your site, your budget, and your tolerance for upkeep, and that keeps water where it belongs: moving away, safely and quietly.

If you keep that focus, the rest of the landscape becomes a joy instead of a chore. Your garden path stays passable after storms, your turf bounces back rather than squishes underfoot, and your basement remains a basement, not a moat. That is the real promise of good drainage, from French drains to dry wells, and it is worth getting right the first time.

Project brief

Start with the use of the space. Record the features you want to keep, the changes you are considering and questions that need a site visit. Photographs help connect each idea with the part of the property it concerns. Keep preferences separate from a proposed construction detail until the options have been discussed.