

A BEAUTIFUL BALANCE

OUTDOOR SPACES
THAT BLEND FLAIR
AND FUNCTION

JAMES LANDSCAPING INC.

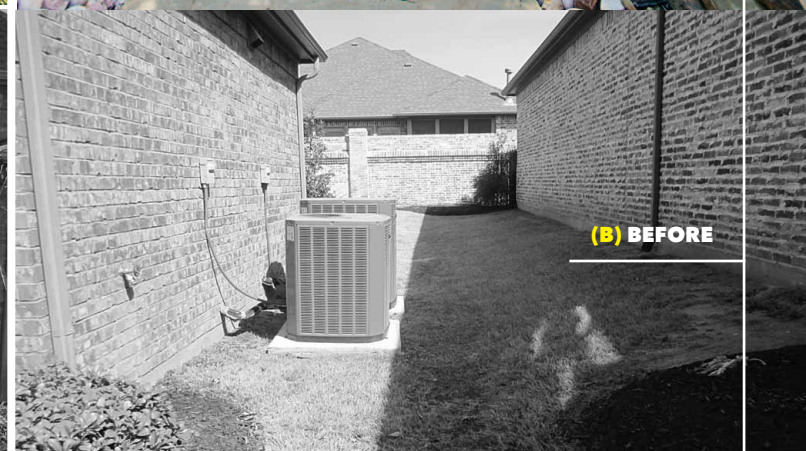
Article by Frank Geslani

Photos by Lorraine Haan-Stewart

James Landscaping

Is it just us or does it seem like our neighbors are working on their yards a little more than usual these days... or maybe we're noticing it more since we've been working from home? These upticks in activity shouldn't come as a surprise. If you have spent any of the past few months stuck at home, you've gotten to know every square inch of your property, inside and out. Perhaps it's the constant reminder of those imperfections that have finally pushed you into action—stubborn patches where plants don't thrive, poorly composed yards that are hard to enjoy, or more serious issues like erosion and flooding that keep you up at night. Homeowners and landscaping professionals alike have been busy transforming outdoor spaces to look and feel more livable. After all, if you have to be at home more than usual, wouldn't you want room to spread out?

(continued on next page)



James Landscaping has been beautifying outdoor spaces long before life in lockdown. In fact, some of the projects they worked on just a few years ago have matured into vibrant and welcoming respites from indoor bubbles. One such project is featured on these pages. The homeowners moved into a lovely home, but were surrounded by an unusable and uninspiring landscape. The James Landscaping team gave their outdoor space a much-needed update.

SIDE YARD GLOW-UP

They say good fences make good neighbors, but with little more than a patch of grass separating one yard from the next, we'd argue that good side yards are even more important. Sadly, side yards are often the most underused and unloved areas. Aside from being bland and overlooked, a neglected side yard can give rise to more serious problems that can have repercussions for multiple properties. For this project, water was a big issue.

"Water has to go somewhere," explained Rhonda James, president and founder of James Landscaping. "A builder often designs yards for water to run through them, but if you don't have good, solid grass to hold the soil (*maybe because there's too much shade for the grass to grow well*) then the water takes the soil right along with it. Sometimes there's standing water—maybe something shifted, or maybe the extreme rainfall amounts we've been getting has caused drainage problems that weren't there before."

In this side yard, the homeowners noticed drainage issues as a result of their zero-lot-line property that sloped down steeply from their neighbor's home. It was also an eyesore. Poor drainage made it difficult for grass to thrive while air conditioning units, assorted wires and meters were completely exposed. James Landscaping gave this challenging space a dramatic transformation.

James and her team created a multi-purpose, dry-stack retaining wall that directly abuts the neighbor's home. It functions as a terrace containing a lush selection of foliage and makes way for a level walkway one tier below. Paved with large flagstones and lined with river rocks, the path also serves as a dry creek bed to channel water away. Beneath the pathway, they installed a French drain to address any residual standing water. For additional depth and interest, the walkway is lined with a verdant plant bed that comes alive with color when its perennials bloom. It is far from the featureless afterthought it once was.

(CONTINUED)

“This is my favorite part of the project,” James admitted. “The terrace effect not only corrected their drainage issue, but it also makes watering more efficient because it allows water to be absorbed into the ground instead of running off. It’s a beautiful pathway that requires little effort to maintain.” It’s easy to shrug off your side yard, but with the help of professionals like James Landscaping, a once forgotten space can make a bold impression.

BACKYARD BLISS

The genius of James’ side yard revamp is that it helped to transform the backyard as well. The backyard, as bland and uninviting as the side yard, also suffered from a sloped grade that caused water to rush across the property.

“They were getting water from their neighbor’s backyard, sending it across their backyard and down to the next neighbor. We used the dry creek bed that went down the side of the house to capture water coming from the neighbor and sent it down the side of the house,” James explained.

It wasn’t just water that made the backyard inhospitable, it was also an overabundance of light. The backyard is bordered by a hefty stone retaining wall connected to a tall brick wall. While imposing, the wall only emphasized how dull the yard looked. Worse, sunlight bounced off the wall and brought an unwelcome glare into their home.

“It was an uncomfortable backyard,” said James. “We softened it significantly by planting magnolias along the back wall. Not only did it eliminate the glare, but it kept the back wall from absorbing too much heat. It now feels a few degrees cooler back there—and with our punishing Texas heat—cooler is always better.”

Throughout the landscape design, James incorporated a mix of plantings that vary in texture, movement and color—from variegated leaves to seasonal blooms. They also used plants to unify spaces. Along the back patio, a magnolia tree replaced a crape myrtle. It both mirrors the back row of magnolias while also reducing clutter from constantly falling crape myrtle flowers. This level of attention-to-detail underscores a big question James Landscaping asks its clients: How do you want your outdoor spaces to work for you?

For some, a thoughtful landscape is about simple liveability. Others want to entertain a crowd or provide a safe space for their kids to romp around. Others want a comfortable, private area to step away from their indoor confines.

Whatever the reason, James Landscaping understands that it’s rarely just about beauty (*though it is a big part*). When designed and executed properly, the true beauty of your landscape is how perfectly in tune it is with how you live.

JamesLandscaping.com
817.329.0528

