

Kablin

ESCAPE WITH COLIN + JUSTIN

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First Look

at Colin + Justin's
winter hideaway

'Tis the season

Let your festivities take centre stage with our easy breezy food and drink recipes

The return of the four-poster bed

A chunky bed frame and minimal dressing ensure a space that feels crisply inviting

Hosting, all wrapped up

A gift package of ideas to pamper your host

HALIBURTON + KAWARTHA LAKES + MUSKOKA

Live In Your Landscape

Winter is the perfect time to plan the outside space at your home – or home from home – to reap rewards come spring, summer and, indeed, fall.

Just as the cottage can be a four-season experience, so too can the landscape by which it's surrounded.

by Colin + Justin

Having worked with Sean Christie, his design executive Jazmine Flannery and the wider team at Rugged Earth Landscaping (on the exterior at Rockcliff, a challenging project, albeit one this team championed), we know that, drawing on decades of experience in the industry, they're perfectly positioned to design landscapes that are picturesque, natural and purposeful. The team's words still ringing on our ears, here's how to tackle outdoor space and, in doing so, enhance your cottage's overall experience.

CREATE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

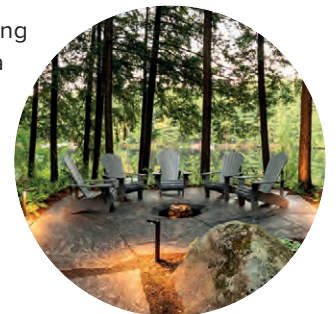
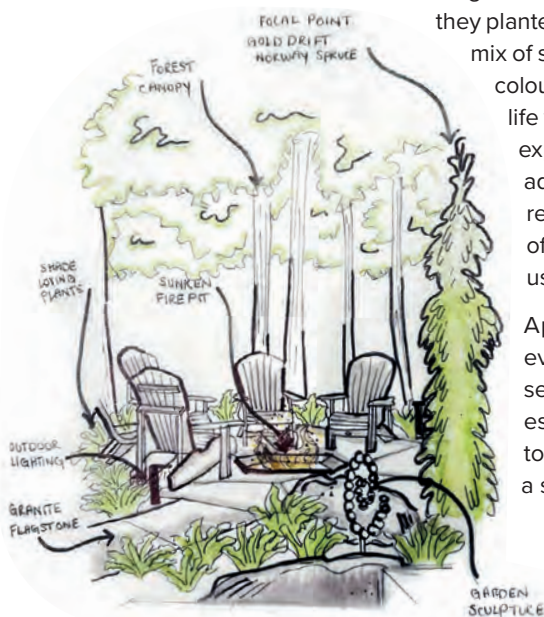
Designing a cottage takes careful thought and intention: it's there, after all – perhaps more than anywhere else – that you can truly self-express. “Looking into a cottage or cabin, you get a sense of its owners’ personality and the kind of lifestyle they lead,” explains Jazmine, adding, “And when it comes to the landscape, similar principles apply. When interior and exterior work in tandem, and even reflect each other, that's when the perfect experience plays out. It's all about connectivity.”

Everything Sean and Jazmine discuss makes perfect sense and, patently, both have the professional background to back up their teachings. Whether working on a massive project for a bold face name in Muskoka (Sean and Jazmine remain discreet, even when pushed to disclose star status, saying only that they've worked for celebrities within the sporting and media communities), or fashioning a neat garden in a smaller row house, they have wide-ranging experience. And, from what we glean, the entire team accords each client the same level of design input, privacy and respect.

OUTDOOR ROOMS

Our conversation is fascinating, and as much as we know a fair bit about landscaping, we learned such a lot as work progressed at Rockcliff, not least that Sean and his team are garden whisperers who simply know what will work best in each area. When they planted the area around our sauna and hot tub, for example, they specified a mix of smaller, fast-growing shrubs as well as various flora to offer year-round colour via fall foliage, winter stems and brightly hued genus that will burst into life when warmer weather arrives. It's all, as the esteemed horticulturalists explained at the time, in the balance and in the mix. Crucially, Sean also added a neat row of eight-feet-high spruce trees (to baffle sight lines) reminding us that, as much as we'd enjoy privacy when dipping in and out of the features, so too would our neighbours appreciate not having to see us in the altogether (!) when enjoying their cottage time.

Appraising overall real estate, and breaking everything into outdoor rooms, helps suffuse a sense of function into each zone. These spaces, essentially, are designed to reflect the rooms to which they connect, to engender, if you like, a sense of transition.



OUTDOOR ROOM EXAMPLES

Entry space/foyer: This is where opportunity exists to create a welcoming environment. It's also important to arrange and detail space to comfortably accommodate pedestrian movement and good circulation. Aesthetics should complement architecture, to further serve a sense of connectivity and identity.

Entertainment/gathering space: These are the areas in which people congregate and relax and their design, ideally, should reflect living areas inside the home. Examples include fire pit areas, lounging spots with comfortable outdoor furniture, or attractive spa zones established to promote optimal wellbeing. Planned carefully, an intimate feel can be created, with various structures, lighting and horticulture specified to enclose space and create the feeling of a regular room.

Outdoor dining space: "The more people travel, and the more they experience," explains Sean, "the more they dream of having an indulgent outdoor dining room. It's the holy grail for many clients. Whether we're creating formal dining for 10, or a small table for two, it's important to set atmosphere. As it is, if we're positioning an outdoors pizza oven, a barbecue station or an inviting spot to enjoy evening cocktails or morning coffee, we'll spend time establishing the perfect stage for these functions to play out. In the same vein as entertainment space, we use landscape elements such as planting and screening to deliver that dream."

Recreation space: "These spaces, while potentially different for everyone," suggests Jazmine, "are the areas where activity occurs. For some clients, this could mean a dedicated lawn space for outdoor pursuits. Although space mightn't be enclosed, its designation for open activity creates a sense of balance." Sean picks up the point: "Other examples could be a pool enclosure, tennis, badminton or pickleball courts, a golf green or tee off area, or perhaps a deck, or a spot in which to play bowls."

HOW TO MAXIMIZE OUTDOOR LIVING

"To make best use of a garden area", explains Sean, "think about it in three dimensions, from root to tip, to create full and considered results."

Base plane: The surface upon which we walk, run, sit, work and play, and the primary dimension where landscape is organised. It's important to define this area based upon its use, which will determine appropriate materials such as hardscape, lawn and garden/ground cover.

Vertical plane: This is often established by existing site elements such as walls, trees and grading. Vertical planes define the surrounding edges of space and affect sightlines and vistas, and can be commandeered to assist in the creation of multiple living areas and privacy

Overhead plane: These are used to delineate and enclose space, their realisation often achieved through horticultural material or built structures. Overhead dimension can influence the scale of an outdoor zone and transform it into an intimate setting via the construction of, for example, a pergola or pavilion, assets that suffuse valuable outdoor function. Furthermore, they provide aesthetic appeal, architectural focus and shade, as well as a sense of enclosure. It's fair to observe that opportunities to maximise outdoor living are endless with structures such as these.

OTHER WAYS TO CREATE LANDSCAPING ATMOSPHERE

Employ privacy screens: These come in various iterations, variously: decorative screens, fences, walls or planting. This important component isn't only useful to provide privacy, but it can also be employed to separate and delineate various zones, and the purpose of each.

Include the existing landscape in your new plan: Opportunity for good spatial planning can, on occasion, be guided by aspects that already exist, and examples include tree formations and canopies, or perhaps an attractive elevation of rock. Positioning an entertainment space – such as a fire pit – can help the area feel nestled without the addition of further structures or design elements.

Use planting to decorate and problem solve: Auspicious planting lends significant impact when it comes to maximizing outdoor living potential: making use of tall shrubs or trees, for example, can engender a sense of privacy. Similarly, horticultural borders or raised planters can also be used to cleverly define space.

Creating multiple zones in a small space: When exterior proportions are limited, it can feel difficult to execute every aspect of your wish list. This observed, however, and with careful planning, even the stoutest ambition can – normally – be achieved by utilising various shapes, layouts and elevations. Examples include sunken patios, raised deck platforms, planter boxes and steps. Different heights and layers such as these can add new dimension and an overall sense of multi-layer balance.

So, can you feel those ideas budding? "If the seeds of potential have been sown in your imagination, now is as good a time as any to kick start your ambition," suggests Sean. "Plotting the way forward takes planning, but we're equipped to help you from vision and consultation, to design and construction, and from project maintenance to seasonal decoration across the entire calendar." Pausing for a moment, he adds: "We, at Rugged Earth, are equipped to show you how to live in and thoroughly enjoy your exterior landscape dream. It might be winter, but spring lies just around the corner."