



Agrifutures



Client



Goals of Design

Permaculture design is a system of assembling conceptual, material, and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms. It seeks to provide a sustainable and secure place for living things on this earth. Functional design sets out to achieve specific ends, and prime directives. Every component of a design should function in many ways. Every essential function should be supported by many components.

Great design is equal parts form and function, so do your part to make your proposal stand out by getting a true understanding of how the space will be used. As a designer, it's your job to look at the process and find the best process to suit the client's needs and, most of all, the client's time & budget.

A good use of a website can show your potential clients how you work and what services and processes you follow to get them a result. I have found that putting prices for types of design work, like consultation, looking at sizes of properties (urban – suburban – small farms – broad acre) and giving clients prices on deliverables within each design size works well.



Understanding the Client

Matching your design to the goals, aspirations, resources, budget and experience of the client is a crucial component of not only creating a sustainable design, but one that can be acted upon and realised by the client.

Once you've worked with your clients to articulate a comprehensive vision, how do your clients plan to implement a permaculture design once the design is completed? The answer to this question is your opportunity not only to make your design beautiful, but also make it functional! The amount a client is willing to spend on maintenance one of the most important questions to ask landscape clients, because it can really help define the types of plants and even hardscaping you use in your design.

Budget is among the most important questions to ask landscape clients. Here's the most crucial of the questions to ask landscape clients: You have to know how much a prospect intends to spend so you can keep your designs within reason and within budget.

Time your question right, though, and ask with tact — with certain customers, talking about costs upfront may make it appear that you are really only interested in the money, not doing the job right.



Initial Visit

When you first meet a prospective customer, you need to spend at least an hour with them for your initial consult. This is the most important hour you will ever spend with them, and it is critical you arrive with a relaxed attitude and do not try to rush through the process. You need to build their trust, and the best way to do that is be genuine and show you are really interested in them and their needs.

Take a slow walk around their property with them and discuss what they like and dislike about their current landscaping. As you walk, take notes about what could be improved, or areas that merit discussion. Taking a walk around the clients site is a great way to kickstart a conversation.

After walking around the property, ask whether you can go inside to talk. Once inside, really take a close look at their house. Is it neat and clean, or messy and disorganized? Do they have a lot of art and books? Do they have a modern decorating style? Do they have pets?

All of these visual clues can give you insight into their personality, and matching their landscape to their personality is the key.



Initial Visit

Sit down, make a little small talk and pull out your questionnaire. The questionnaire should include questions such as:

- What's their vision?
- How do they plan to implement a permaculture design once the design is completed?
- What do they think it's going to take to achieve their vision?

After the questionnaire, inform them you are going back outside to take measurements, and you will meet with them again soon to present your estimate and landscape design.