

## THE COST OF CUTTING CORNERS

By Tony Catanzaro, Certified Landscape Technician

Many people are shocked to find out that a large percentage of what a design/build professional does is redesign and re-build others people's landscape projects. Some are thirty to fifty years old and must be upgraded. But many are often less than ten years old. These newer projects are the lion's share of what my company redesigns and builds. Why rip out and re-do landscaping that is so new? **The reasons are many but often it was poor planning, cost cutting, and 'cutting corners'.**

Problems start with the lack of planning and design by a qualified designer. Design errors in plant selection can create overgrown messes in just a few short years. Lack of knowledge with the impact of deer pressure can wipe out thousands of dollars of material in one night. Wet sites planted with material that has little tolerance for that condition would develop root rot and die out quickly.

Even properly selected and sited plant materials need proper installation. While it is very easy to 'pop things in' properly planting things so that they can prosper over time takes time and skill. I have observed many installations in major decline from being planted too deep, failure to remove rope/twine from the trunk, failure to remove the top of the wire cage, failure to remove the burlap from the top of the root ball, tree stakes and guy wires left on too long, and the list goes on. It does take more time to plant things correctly and the skilled people to do it may also cost more but it still is a lot cheaper than replacing everything in the coming years.

Hardscape installations are typically a large percentage of the budget. **After replacing countless pavers and wall projects that were failing after a few short years in service, you begin to understand that it is more economical to do it right the first time. Most paver projects fail due to lack of base preparation. Some typical causes of these failures are incorrect base depth, lack of geo-textile fabric in a heavy clay soil, lack of compaction to the base materials, incorrect screeding edging restraint installation, etc. The same goes for retaining walls with the big offender being lack of drainage and geo-grid layers for support.** Additionally, most municipalities require an engineered plan for walls over four feet high. The removal and re-construction of these projects often costs more than the initial installation.

Poor designed sprinkler systems will show themselves in time of drought. Areas will develop in your lawn and landscape that will not get enough water because to cut cost the amount of spray heads were reduced. This will cause expenses with plant replacements and lawn repairs. To go back and add spray heads and zone to an existing system will definitely cost more than at the time of the initial installation. That is if your clock has enough zones for you to add the amount of heads you need to add or you will face that additional expense as well.

**What this all adds up to is a huge hidden cost to the consumer. While the cost of proper planning, design, and installation may seem to far exceed the "low cost service providers" the long term beauty, value and integrity of your home and landscape will only increase through the years and not become a liability.**