Smart Landscaping Choices for Homeowners in the Greater Toronto Area

After fifteen years working on properties across Markham, Scarborough, and the wider Greater Toronto Area, I have learned that good landscaping is about more than just curb appeal. It is about making choices that hold up through our freeze-thaw cycles, that handle the clay soil we dig into every day, and that fit the way a family actually uses their yard. When a homeowner asks me where to start, I often point them to a resource like https://www.jaydenslandscaping.ca/ for a sense of what a full-service approach can look like. But the real work happens on the ground, one decision at a time.

Start with the Surface: Interlocking Pavers and Driveways

The driveway is usually the largest single hardscape element on a residential property. In my experience, interlocking pavers offer a better long-term value than poured concrete for most GTA homes. Concrete looks clean at first, but our winters are hard on it. Salt, freeze-thaw, and even the weight of a snow plow can cause cracking within a few seasons. Interlocking brick, on the other hand, flexes with the ground movement. If a section settles or gets damaged, you can pull out the affected interlocking pavers, re-level the base, and put them back. No patching, no color mismatch.

I have seen driveways in Scarborough that were laid with interlocking brick twenty years ago and still look solid. The key is the base preparation. You need proper grading and drainage underneath, especially on clay soils that hold water. Without that, even the best interlocking pavers will shift. A good contractor will dig down deep, add crushed stone, compact in layers, and then screed sand before placing the pavers. That process is not quick, but it is what keeps the surface level when the ground heaves in March.

Permeable Pavers for Modern Yards

Permeable pavers have become more common in Ontario over the past decade, and for good reason. They allow rainwater to soak through the joints and into the ground below, reducing runoff and helping with drainage issues. On properties where the yard slopes toward the house, permeable pavers can be part of a larger solution that includes grading and drainage work. They cost a bit more upfront than standard interlocking pavers, but they can reduce the need for extra drainage infrastructure. I have installed them on several projects in Markham where the municipal storm system was already overloaded, and the homeowners appreciated doing their part while getting a durable driveway.



Retaining Walls and Hardscape Structure

Retaining walls are another element where material choice matters a lot. In the Greater Toronto Area, we see a lot of segmental block walls, which are basically stacked concrete blocks that rely on weight and a slight setback for stability. They work well for walls up to about four feet tall. For anything higher, you need engineering and probably a poured concrete or reinforced block wall with proper drainage behind it. I have seen too many DIY walls from big-box stores bulge out after a wet spring because the builder skipped the gravel backfill and perforated pipe.

Flagstone is a material I love for patios and walkways, but it requires a careful eye. Each piece is a different shape, so installation takes longer than with uniform patio stones. The result is a natural, organic look that fits well with garden beds and mulched areas. If you want a more uniform surface, cut patio stones or concrete curbs can define the edge of a driveway or garden bed cleanly. Concrete curbs are especially useful for separating lawn from mulch areas, keeping the grass from creeping into the beds.

Softscape: Sod, Mulch, and Garden Beds

A lot of homeowners underestimate how much soil preparation matters for a lawn. Sod installation is not just rolling out strips of grass. You need to remove the old vegetation, bring in topsoil if the existing soil is thin or compacted, grade it so water runs away from the foundation, and then roll the sod onto a moist, level bed. I have seen sod laid over dry clay in July that was dead by August. It is heartbreaking for the homeowner and a waste of money.

Garden beds benefit from a fresh layer of mulch every year or two. Mulch suppresses weeds, holds moisture in the soil, and breaks down over time to feed the plants. I prefer shredded hardwood mulch over dyed rubber or bark nuggets. Hardwood mats down and stays in place better, and it does not wash away during heavy rain. On properties with steep slopes, landscape fabric under the mulch helps even more, though nothing stops weeds completely. You still have to pull them by hand.



Seasonal Maintenance: Yard Cleanup and Snow Removal

Yard cleanup is one of those tasks that seems simple but makes a huge difference in how a property looks. Spring cleanup means raking out the winter debris, cutting back dead perennials, and refreshing the mulch. Fall cleanup is about leaves, leaf removal, and cutting back tender plants before the frost. A thorough yard cleanup also includes checking the grading and drainage around the house. If you see water pooling near the foundation after a rain, that is a sign you need to address it before winter.

Snow removal is a fact of life in Ontario, and a good snow plow operator can save you from a lot of shoveling. But you need someone who understands where to pile the snow without blocking sightlines or damaging the lawn. In Markham and Scarborough, driveways often have interlocking brick, and a plow with a metal blade can scrape off the surface if the operator is not careful. Many contractors use rubber-edged plows or adjust the blade height to avoid damaging the pavers. If you are shopping for snow removal services, ask about their

equipment. A company that also does landscaping, like https://www.jaydenslandscaping.ca/, is likely to be more careful with your hardscape than a plow-only outfit.

Driveway Sealcoating and Long-Term Care

Driveway sealcoating is a topic that comes up every spring. For asphalt driveways, sealcoating every two to three years can extend the life of the pavement by protecting it from UV rays, salt, and oil drips. But for interlocking brick, sealcoating is more of a cosmetic choice. The sealer can help prevent weed growth in the joints and make the color pop, but it does not add structural strength. I have seen sealcoated interlocking driveways that looked great for two years and then started fading patchily. If you do sealcoat, you have to reapply on schedule, or the uneven wear looks worse than no sealer at all.

Lighting and Finishing Touches

Landscape lighting is one of the best investments you can make for evening enjoyment and security. Low-voltage LED path lights along a walkway, uplights on a retaining wall or a mature tree, and step lights on a patio all add warmth without glare. I recommend installing the wiring during the initial hardscape work, because trenching through finished pavers or established garden beds later is messy and expensive. Even a few well-placed fixtures change how the yard feels after dark.



I have worked on enough projects to know that no two properties are the same. A house on a ravine lot in Scarborough has different drainage needs than a new-build in Markham with a

postage-stamp yard. That is why I always advise homeowners to start with a clear list of priorities: what do you use the yard for, what problems do you see now, and what is your budget for the next two years. A site visit from a landscaping professional can help you separate the must-haves from the nice-to-haves.

For anyone in the Greater Toronto Area looking for a partner who handles both the design and the maintenance side of things, resources like https://www.jaydenslandscaping.ca/ give a good picture of the range of services available. From interlocking driveways to retaining walls, from sod installation to snow plow contracts, a full-service company can coordinate the work so the grading, drainage, hardscape, and softscape all work together. That kind of integration is what makes a yard not just beautiful, but functional through every Ontario season.