

LANDSCAPE ORNAMENTAL SERIES

A Guide for Louisiana Landscape Professionals



Landscape Edging Concepts

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A landscape bed showcases a variety of ornamental plants, distinctly drawing attention from the expansive turf or concrete which surrounds it. A valuable resource in maintaining this sharp scenery is the use of landscape bed edging. Edging a landscape bed not only adds an aesthetic imagery, but also offers several benefits that provide economic and ecological value. Follow along to learn how you can create a sharper scene in your landscape.

Purpose of Edging

Landscape beds are precisely prepared and meticulously maintained to create a pleasant environment for plants. Soil preparation (adding amendments, tilling and topdressing), mulching and installation of plant materials are a capital investment that may be necessary to repeat on several occasions over a duration of time. Properly edging landscape beds will go a long way in protecting your investment and elevating the project site.

The edge of a bed is that thin line that separates the end of a mulched plot from the rest of the landscape, oftentimes an open turf area. From an aesthetic point of view, a clean, crisp line offers a level of professionalism to the installation that is certainly sought by homeowners. Furthermore, a solid barrier can be effective for string-trimming around sensitive boundaries and preventing the washout of mulch and fertilizer. Most of all, installing edging around mulched garden beds prevents turfgrass from growing into the bed, which requires regular maintenance to mitigate.

Edging Material Options

There are several materials and practices that can be employed to create a defined edge in the landscape. Common materials that are used include plastic or steel edging, concrete edging, and stone or paver edging. Practices that can be used to maintain a hard edge around your landscape bed can often be done without expending costs; a little precision with a spade can effectively cut that beautiful boundary.



Steel edging provides a durable barrier to keep mulch in and grass out of landscape beds.



Brick edging offers an aesthetic appeal to the landscape and works well with paver walkways.

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Landscape timbers provide a more natural looking edge to the landscape.

Plastic or steel edging creates a rigid, uniform boundary material. Plastic weighs less, is less expensive and is easy enough to install; however, its longevity in the landscape is often much less than the steel edges. Steel edging offers more durability than plastic but comes at a steeper cost. In both cases, it is common to lay down the edging around the desired bed, and then anchor it into the ground. Many edging materials have precut grooves for the recommended reinforcing stake to hold the line. A more naturalized look can be achieved through the use of weathered wooden barriers. Laying down a 4"x4" post or landscape timber at the edge of a bed provides a rustic restraint to keep mulch in place. A concrete curb provides a rock-solid edge to a landscape bed; but if more masterful masonry is desired, consider using pavers, bricks or a mix of stones. If the landscape bed is in an area where drainage is a concern, drilling holes into the sides of the edging can allow water to flow out and prevent a soggy situation from developing.

These solid edges can be installed around beds either above or below the soil surface, depending on if you want an elevated landscape bed, which is ideal in compacted soils, or a sunken landscape bed, which is ideal if drainage and compaction are not of primary concern. If the edge of a landscape bed is below the soil surface level, some handiwork with a sharp spade can cut an effective edge that may not need a supplementary barrier.



Plastic edging is an affordable alternative for low traffic areas to keep materials separated.



Beds without landscape edging may have mulch washout in the rain, potentially causing downstream clogging.

Practical Uses in the Landscape

Installing an edge around a landscape bed certainly adds style, but it also provides opportunities to cut down on maintenance. Having a hard barrier around the bed can prevent the washout of mulch, reducing the necessity to replenish the mulch as frequently. Furthermore, this prevents the mulch from washing towards undesirable locations in the landscape. Barriers can be effective in preventing mulches from intermixing with other materials

or from washing down the drain. This can be especially valuable around drainage features, as clogging can lead to a costly conundrum for wet sites.

A solid edge provides a backstop for string-trimming and other maintenance procedures. With a hard boundary between the bed and the turf, strings and cutting blades can get right up to the bed edge without causing damage or unsightly messes. Not to mention, this convenience can significantly reduce the time needed to trim those troublesome turf edges.



Concrete edges are a long-lasting border for beds, particularly in urban areas and in high-traffic locations.



Edging can keep different materials separated, which maintains the material aesthetic and may be useful in protecting drainage features from clogging.

For more information on landscape edging, please contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office or visit www.lsuagcenter.com.

Photos by Damon Abdi.



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