



# DESIGN. CRAFT. PRESERVE.

## THE LANDSCAPE RESCUE GUIDE

### | The 10-Minute Landscape Audit

Before you spend another dollar at the garden center or grab a shovel, put on your boots and take this checklist outside. Let's look at the raw structural health of your yard.

#### **DRAINAGE & WATER FLOW:** THE FOUNDATION RISK

- The Downpour Test:**  
During or immediately after a heavy rain, where is the water pooling? Is it draining away from your home's foundation, or sitting in a low spot near the house?
- Erosion Check:**  
Are there visible channels or mini-gullies being carved into exposed dirt sections by rain or spring thaws?
- Grading Health:**  
Is open dirt properly sloped, or is a half-finished pile of topsoil redirecting runoff toward your driveway or a neighbor's property?

#### **HARDSCAPE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY:** THE FREEZE-THAW RISK

- Wall Alignment:**  
Look down the line of any unfinished block or stone retaining walls. Are any sections bowing out, leaning, or showing gaps?
- Frost Heave Check:**  
Did any un-sanded pavers or un-backfilled blocks shift or tilt over the winter?
- Edge Restraints:**  
Are the edges of your unfinished patio securely locked in, or are the outer stones starting to drift into the surrounding dirt?

#### **WEED & SOIL ASSESSMENT:** THE TAKEOVER RISK

- Invasive Identification:**  
Identify the weeds taking over open patches. Are you dealing with standard crabgrass, or deep-rooted Northern invaders like buckthorn, tansy, or spotted knapweed?
- Material Inventory:**  
List exactly what is sitting on-site (e.g., "2 pallets of pavers, 10 retaining wall blocks"). Note: Check if leftover pavers are from the same dye-lot before trying to buy more to match.

# | The Triage Workbook

You can't fix everything this weekend, and you shouldn't try to. Use this matrix to prioritize your budget and energy. Protect the structure and the foundation first, decorate last.

Priority Level	Project Type	Why It Can't Wait
<b>CRITICAL</b> (Do This Now)	Grading & Drainage Fixes	Prevents basement flooding, mold, and costly soil erosion during heavy rains.
<b>HIGH</b> (Next 30 Days)	Locking Down Hardscapes	Unfinished stone work will shift during the next freeze-thaw cycle, forcing a total tear-out later.
<b>MEDIUM</b> (This Season)	Groundcover & "Filler" Shrubs	Planting fast-growing native species (like Ninebark or Dogwood) chokes out invasives and hides ugly transitions.
<b>LOW</b> (Next Season)	Premium Aesthetics & Lighting	Ornamental plants, complex garden beds, and accent lighting.

## | The Hardscape Pivot

**If a project is stalled because it is too complex or expensive, write down how you can simplify it using local materials:**

- Instead of a precision-cut paver patio, can we pivot to Natural Flagstone or Crushed Granite?
- Instead of an intricate, multi-level wall, can we use local Basalt Boulders to break up the slope naturally?

## | A 3-Year Master Plan

- **Year 1: Stability.** Focus strictly on dirt, grading, drainage, and retaining wall "bones." Get a green base (lawn or clover) established to hold the earth.
- **Year 2: Function.** Build the actual footprint you want to live on—the patio surface, the fire pit ring, or the primary walkway.
- **Year 3: Aesthetics.** Bring in the fun details—the perennial beds, the privacy trees (like Black Hills Spruce), and the finishing touches.

### Stuck? Let's Finish It Together.

Fixing a failed or stalled landscape is a challenge. At Boulder Creek Outdoor Living, we specialize in "landscape rescues" across Duluth, the Iron Range, and the North Shore. We will sit down with your completed audit checklist, take a look at what you've already started, and build a professional, seamless plan to get your yard off your "to-do" list and into your "ready-to-enjoy" list.



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