How does the planning process work?

“We begin by conversing about how the space will be used, whether it be extremely functional, simply aesthetic, or somewhere in between. Then the conversation moves on to what style appeals to the client and how to incorporate it as part of the architecture of the home. Once these basics are determined, budgets and a realistic discussion on future maintenance can happen.”

—MARK RUibal, RUibal’s

Our typical project ranges between two and six months. When talking about average durations of projects, that include a landscape, pool, outdoor living, etc., there are many factors we must take into account. Planning is the key to this process and is the most essential first step to any project we undertake. Proper planning can save the homeowner both time and money. On average, we always like to outline the expectation that with any construction project, there are a series of unknowns that must be accounted for—the most important being the weather. After the past few months we have experienced, nothing could be truer. Weather is always the biggest wild card and something we must always consider when undertaking a project. This is why timing and seasons are very important when you are considering a new project for your home.”

—CHRIS PSENCIk, SOUTHERN BOTANICAL

What are some pretty plants that work well here?

“This is very subjective and we could come up with thousands. Here are a few alternatives that are gaining popularity: As an alternative to crepe myrtle for a sun-loving ornamental, try vitex. For a screen hedge, rather than a traditional holly, try osmanthus fortunii. As an alternative to liriope, try ornamental grasses. Though there are many adaptive species, but your safest bets are always materials that are native to our area.”

—CHRIS PSENCIk

I think one of the most under utilized plants is a large, deciduous flowering shrub that can also be limbed up and used as a small ornamental tree. They are extremely drought tolerant, grow quickly, and provide profuse blooms during the summer months.

—DANIEL HOUCHARD

“Impatiens offer the best color for shade. Profusion or zahara zinnia forms green balls of color. A few perennials I really like that come in summer are “Black and Blue” salvia, which attracts hummingbirds with its new blue blooms, and most of the hardy hibiscus and their huge blooms.”

—MARK RUbial

“We typically like to use plants that are flowering perennials with lots of color. Texas-native plants, depending on factors of sun/shade/water, etc. Ornamental grasses look really nice in landscape to add color a
How does weather affect pool installation?

“We need the rain to stay away. We can’t shoot gunite or work on masonry or plaster in inclement weather. Depending on design detail (is there a built-in fountain or other element that adds to construction framing/concrete pouring?), the most generic pool will probably take up to two months. More detailed pools can take three to four months. Start early in winter or early spring so you can use it the next summer!”

—STEPHANIE LAVOIE WALKER, LAMBERT’S

Best advice to someone just starting the process?

“Find a firm or individual you trust and feel you can communicate well with. Do they understand your style? Do you feel they listen to your needs? Be realistic with the budget and invest in quality. It is a lot more expensive to fix things down the road. Finally, only enter into a landscape project if you are prepared to continue to invest in the ongoing maintenance. Plants will only grow and flourish if they are properly cared for.”

—GLENN BONICK

Have an idea of how you want to use the space. Or do you just want to look out the windows and pause at something beautiful? Once you know, we can design and build around those wants and needs.”

—STEPHANIE LAVOIE WALKER

It is always a good idea to have a professional designer put together a master plan for your backyard. That way the entire space is planned out. If a client ends up only doing part of their project, they at least have a plan and vision of where they can add on in the future. If they don’t have a design, then backyards tend to get piecemealed together, and the client ends up being unsatisfied because their backyard doesn’t flow together from a design standpoint. That can sometimes cost them more money over time. Patience is key. Be open minded to ideas and options.

—DAVID GAONA

“Evergreen plants are desirable because they stay green year-round while other plants go dormant for the winter.”

—DAVID GAONA

Special Advertising Section

RYAN FITZGERALD
THE WINDOW OUTFITTERS

ABOUT RYAN: He’s originally from Australia, and he’s the Vice President at TWO, manufacturer and distributor of products such as Weatherwell Elite Aluminum Shutters, which he also designed.

How can potential clients prepare for the first meeting? Ideally, they would come in with images of their project, rough dimensions, and a budget. When they visit the showroom, they are seeing the product in real life for the first time. Once they see the quality and what they can achieve, their budget usually increases dramatically. For both residential and commercial customers, we always do an onsite measure so we can quote and give advice.

How does the process work? For residential customers, if they don’t visit the showroom there is generally just one meeting at their home to measure and quote. If they choose to move forward, their products are custom-built here in the factory in Carrollton in five weeks. Installation usually takes place within a day. Large commercial projects are a little more involved.

What are some of the benefits of your product? Customers get more use out of their outdoor areas. The shutters offer wind, rain, and sun protection. They also offer privacy, and in cases where customers use the shutters to totally enclose their outdoor spaces they offer security so they can protect their belongings. Not only do the shutters move, but the panels accordion back to appreciate a view. They are maintenance free and have Miami-Dade hurricane wind ratings. They also enhance the look of the house.

What’s the most popular finish for your Dallas clients? Definitely our Walnut Wood Grain powder coat. It looks and is textured like real wood, and it suits the rustic look of many outdoor areas in DFW.

Do you work with landscape designers? Yes absolutely, as well as architects and builders. In fact, when working with architects and designers, it’s often pre-construction, which allows for more opportunities and uses of product and different installation methods that often aren’t available post-construction.