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HOW TO PREPARE A SITE SURVEY

Here are my notes detailing what I will need for our upcoming design consultation.

I need an accurate site drawing showing the footprint of the house, and all hard surfaces as located on the property. By hard surfaces I mean driveways, concrete sidewalks, gravel paths, patios, stairs and decks. *The City or County Planning Department will have a copy of what the builder submitted to receive a building permit if you did not receive one when you purchased the house.....however what the builder submitted is before it was built.* We need an “as built” drawing which will involve measuring and correcting as needed. The house location as built is usually different than the submitted drawing and that is the first piece of information to collect. You can also get a copy of your property lines on <http://washims.co.washington.or.us/gis/intermap> . This will provide a picture of the property lines but not the measurements.

Measure the house.

Pin the tape measure down at the base of one corner of the house. I use a screwdriver and a 50' tape. Measure to the nearest ½ foot, too much accuracy is confusing.

Lay the tape so you measure it left to right. Take down each measurement where a window, door or some other feature of importance starts and then stops. Indicate those measurements on a notebook and then draw the house on graph paper using the scale, 1' equals 1/4" or 1/8" depending on the size of the yard. Work your way counter-clock ways around the house. **Always place the house on the graph paper so the front of the house faces the front edge of the paper.**

Measure property lines.

To find the correct angle and distance for property lines; measure from both corners of each side of the house to the fence, sidewalk, or road. If you don't have those indicators, you will need to find the property markers and run a string or 100' tape measure between the lot markers. Then you can measure from the house to the string. Once you have the house on paper, and have input the distance from all the corners of the house, you should be able to draw property lines by extending lines past the markers. Where the lines meet are the corners of your property.

Measure important features in the garden.

You can measure items in the yard two ways: Measuring perpendicular to a known line or triangulation.

We found the property lines by **measuring perpendicular to a known line**, the house. This is a good way to measure things that are near the house or near the fence. Just lay the tape measure along the known line and measure the distance out from the house or fence that the item is from the line. I then write them in a chart. The distance along the line first, then the distance from the line. I also use a + or - to indicate whether it is above or below the line or left or right from the line. Example (4,-7) would be 4 feet from the left side of the front of the house and 7 feet towards the street.

Triangulation is good when the item is out in the middle of an area. Measure the distance from both corners of the house to the item. Then draw two circles on the paper the correct distances from the corners of the house. Where the two circles meet is the center of the item.

I note doors and windows, overhangs, existing hard surfaces, (decks, patios, sheds, driveway etc) hose bibs, utilities, neighbors trees within 10' of the property line. It is very important to know where underground utilities such as drain fields, subterranean heat pump pipes, septic, dry well etc. are. Where does the water, electricity and gas come into the property? See sample drawing for other details and "nice to haves"

A north arrow, some info on winter wind direction (if you know), wet areas during winter and or summer, areas where most plants have died or look so bad you wish they would. This type of info can just be noted **off to the side** or on notepaper.

Tools I find helpful two 50' tape measures or at least a couple of 25' ones. Screwdriver to hold the tap measure down or a helper. I supply grid paper and a scale in 1/4" or 1/8" per square foot. Please use one of those two scales. Do not use a scale of 1' = 1/10" or 1/5".

I'll only need the area we're going to design on the paper, but if you do the entire yard, you'll probably be glad it's there when you go to work on another area of your yard.

I hope these notes are helpful to you. Please call if you have any questions.