

HOME TIPS: Landscaping



TYPICAL CONDITION



SUPERIOR DESIGN

Spring has arrived and many people are designing and planning yard, garden and landscaping projects. I encourage you to think about how your plans will affect the other components of your house. Nearly all properties have a garden or flower bed (some with irrigation systems), placed directly beside the foundation of the house. I cannot think of a single significant advantage to placing a garden or flower bed directly beside the foundation of a house. However, several **big** disadvantages come to mind:

- Gardens and flower beds placed directly against the house get a lot of heat reflected back on to them as the sun beats down against the house. This dries out the surface soil much quicker, and creates a harsher environment for our plants and flowers to thrive in.
- Gardens and flower beds placed directly against a house get watered heavily. This usually means that we are spraying water on to the siding or trim of the house. This water can be soaked up by porous products like masonry and stucco (which will shorten their life), or can peel paint and deteriorate/rot wood, or can get in behind vinyl siding causing damage to the sheathing of the house.
- As water gets poured on to gardens and flower beds, any excess water runs down our foundation walls to the basement, and can actually make the basement leak. This also makes the ground around the house settle more (negative grading), which means that rain and melting snow cannot run away from the foundation. This allows moisture to collect and pool in these areas which also makes the basement prone to leakage.

When planning the garden and flower bed areas near the house, you should consider the above possibilities for damage. One suggestion would be to have the walkway between the house and the garden, so that the walkway is sloped away from the foundation of the house toward the garden. There are several advantages to this:

- The garden and flower bed areas are more vivid and prominent when viewed from the street, and can likely be seen better from the inside of the house when standing at a window.
- The garden and flower bed is also easier to weed and care for, as it is accessible by the gardener from both the front and back sides.
- Obviously, there is less chance of moisture damage to the siding and trim on the house from watering, as well as reducing the possibility of basement leakage.