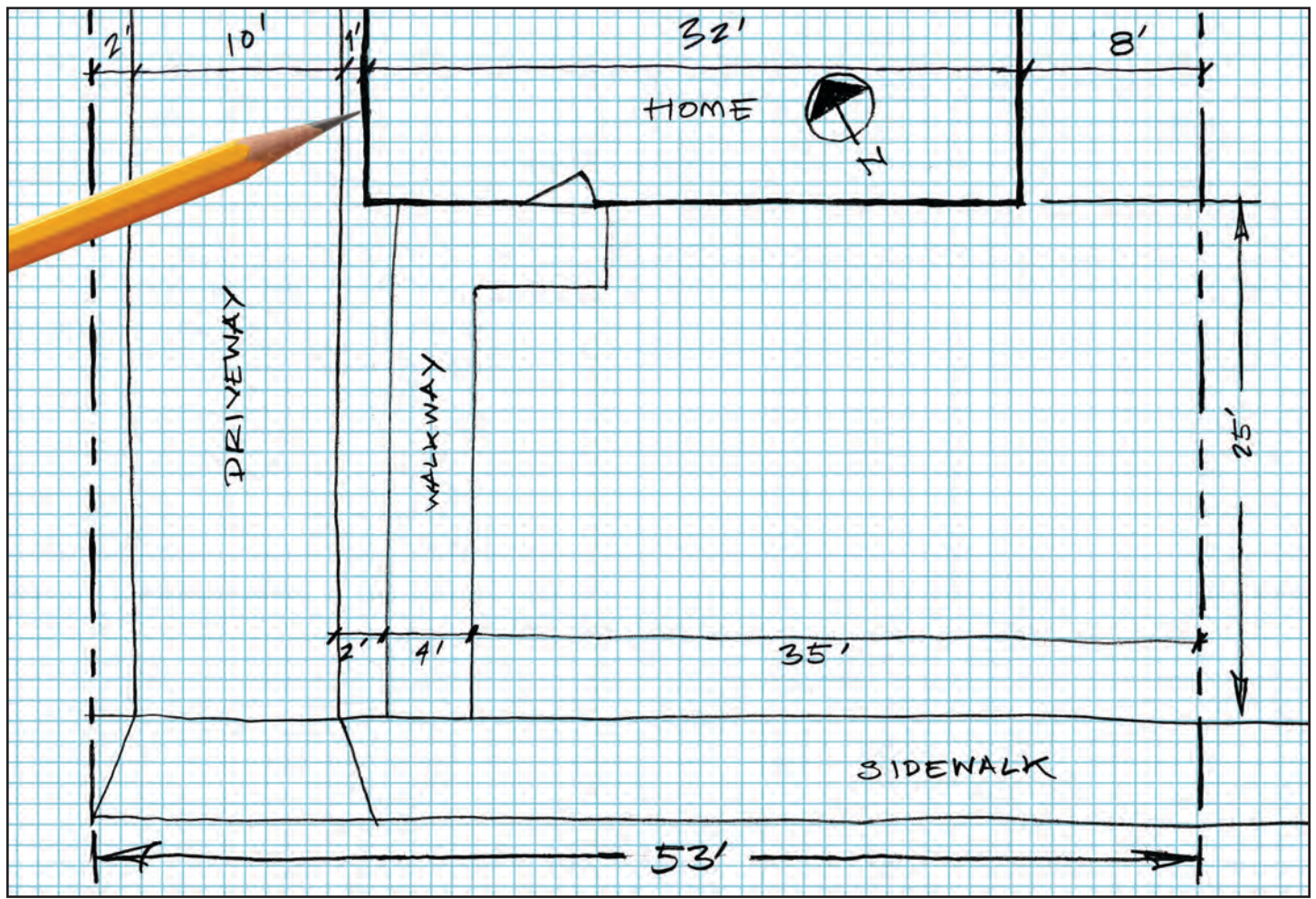


Start with a Site Plan



© G3, Alex Stevens, 2020



Measure to Make Your Site Plan

Measure your site. Once you've got the dimensions, trace the lines cleanly on a sheet of grid paper. Make at least 10 copies that are dark enough to still see the grid. You will use each of these sheets to evaluate and plan the changes for each aspect of your landscape. **Our grass area above is 25' x 35' or 875 sq. ft.**

Depending upon the size of your property, most projects can use a 1/4" = 1' scale. Try using 1 box = 1 foot.

Mark the locations of trees and large shrubs you are unlikely to remove. Always use three reference points to triangulate the location of trees. Label any hard surfaces like driveways and walkways.

Take some photos and mark where they are located on your site plan. Use your smartphone or a compass to find North and also mark it on the plan.

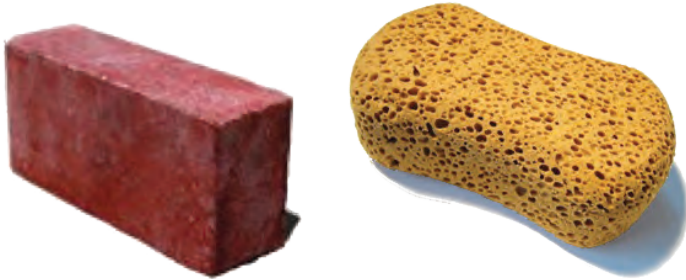
Mind The Foundation

Be sure to mark your doors, windows and footprint of your building on your plans. You will be grading the soil away from foundations and locating your mounded up berms and swales 5' - 10' away from the foundation of the buildings and 3' from edges of the walkways or neighbors.

Need help finding dimensions? maps.google.com

Look at Google Maps for help placing building and trees on your property. Just type in your address, zoom in, and use the Satellite view.

Test your soil

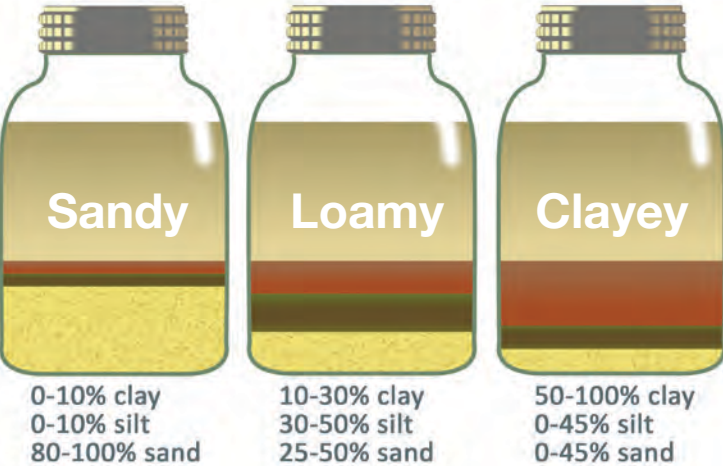


Is your soil a Brick or a Sponge?

If you have a brick you will need to take this into consideration when planning your contours. You will need to spend some time and effort to turn the soil back into a sponge. If the soil does not drain well, you will need to take special care when you plant that you do not drown your new plants.

We want to have soil in our landscape that can capture water and allow it to soak into the plant root zone within 24 - 48 hours. Building **healthy soil** therefore becomes important in our plan to capture rainwater and save it for a dry day, so you will need to follow the Soil Lasagna Recipe (see pp. 39-40).

Before we figure out how to grow better soil, we need to figure out what kind of soil we have. Sand, Silt and Clay, are the basic soil types. The smallest particles create clay soil and the largest make sandy soil, with loam (an even blend of sand, silt and clay) considered the "just right" medium. Professional designers will take soil samples and send them off to a lab for recommendations.



Which jar does your sample most look like?

For Example: If there are equal proportions of Sand and Silt, and very little Clay, then the proportions are something like 40% Sand and 40% Silt and 20% Clay.

Loam best describes the jar with 40% Sand, 40% Silt, and 20% Clay.

Your soil is Loam.

Percolation Test

You Will Need:



1. Dig a hole about 12" deep and 12" wide (that's a little larger than a 1 gal. plant container).
2. Fill the hole with water and wait. Note how long it takes to drain completely. This is necessary to completely saturate the soil.
3. Fill the hole all the way when all the water has drained out from first filling, and see how long it takes to drain out again.
4. Lay a stick or shovel handle across the hole and measure the distance from the top of the water to the stick each hour until it has drained completely.

Results:

>4" per hour - You have sand and need to add more organic matter to improve the soil (see p. 63).

<1" per hour - **You have a brick!** Your soil needs some extra help so try sheet mulching (see pp. 39-40).

1" - 4" per hour - Congratulations! Your soil drains well!
You have a sponge!

Determine Soil Type Using A Jar Test

(This is fun to do with kids!)

You Will Need:

- 1 Qt. size glass container with lid
- 1 Cup of soil from the garden (Select one area per container, or take samples from several holes and blend them together.)
- 1 Teaspoon of alum (Find in baking section of grocery.)
- 3 Cups of distilled water

1. **Add soil, water, and alum together** in the glass container and shake until all solids are suspended.
2. **Place container on a shelf** and wait 24 hours.
3. **Wait another 24 hours**, if the container is still cloudy. After 48 hours, the layers should be settled: **Sand** on the bottom, **Silt** in the middle, and **Clay** on top.
4. **Measure the layers** in proportion to each other.
5. **Use the graphic** to determine the Soil Type based on the proportions of Sand, Silt or Clay.

Determine your Soil Type so that you can better program your "smart" irrigation controller and so you can select plants best adapted to your site.