



## STROLLING THROUGH A LAWN OF BEAUTY WITH CLEARVIEW LANDSCAPING'S CHRIS HULME

In Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, you can find Lynnewood Hall, a Gilded Age mansion built in 1899 and abandoned—though it's currently in restoration mode—after its intended residents perished on the Titanic. The estate was once hailed by its original owner's grandson, Peter A.B. Widener II, as “the last of the American Versailles.”

But it wouldn't have earned such a distinction without its once impressive feat of horticultural artistry designed by French architect Jacques Gréber: a meticulously crafted garden maze, a bubbling fountain, and shrubbery pruned with mathematical precision. For this mansion and any modern home, the importance of architecture and landscaping is inextricable.

Failing to create a harmonious landscape is akin to baking a masterpiece cake and then neglecting to adorn it with icing—it may taste about the same, but it doesn't look as good.

Try as you might, you can't escape your yard. From your kitchen window, the dead lemon trees haunt you, and so does that portion of lawn where you once imagined a pool. Maybe you can live with it, but it's not what you *really* want. Says Chris Hulme, owner of Clearview Landscaping, “If you're looking at something every day, you don't want to hate it.”

## SPLENDOR OF THE GRASS

STORY BY TIANA MOLONY | PHOTOS BY KIM REIERSON



This is precisely the mindset of a homeowner who enlisted Clearview Landscaping's help over a year ago. They decided it was finally time to do something about their less-than-ideal backyard, which paled in comparison to their beautiful Hope Ranch residence. Nothing was inherently wrong with what they had before, but it no longer suited their needs.

I'm told they envisioned a space the whole family could enjoy together while also maintaining elements of the previous backyard, like the beloved avocado trees and the fountain the family built together. That's where Clearview comes in. "We want to be able to connect with the heart and soul of the potential of a property," Hulme says as we saunter around the place.

At the base of the two-acre property, there's a bocce ball court and a putting green. As we follow the winding path to the main house, we pass a diverse floral bed—Marine Blue Sage, Island Pink Yarrow, and Snow Flurry Lilacs among the flower varieties. Next to the house, there's that ethereal, fluffy grass—Native Mow Free. It's the kind that makes you feel like you're in Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. Everything about this project was meticulously planned, down to *The Lorax* grass, which is low maintenance and, as Hulme mentions, "Makes the HOA and the waterways people really happy."

**A**t the start of any landscape project, the backyard is “kind of like a blank canvas,” Hulme says. Not every work of art has to be as sublime as the gardens of Versailles to lend meaning, but that doesn’t mean it can’t come close.

Ultimately, the landscape should reflect the homeowner. And if that homeowner wants a golden fountain with Apollo on his chariot, then so be it. But if it’s a timeless, laid-back design they desire, say, an outdoor barbeque with a pizza oven, that’s fine too. “For somebody who is retiring in this house, somebody who’s gonna pass this house on to their kids and grandkids someday,” Hulme says. “They’re leaving a legacy behind.”

Sometimes, it’s the small changes that have a lasting impact on our daily lives. One of my most beloved morning rituals is enjoying my morning coffee on my deck, which was a dirt patch a few months ago. Without that simple wooden deck, I’m not sure I would feel compelled to pull out a chair every morning and sip. If it weren’t for that deck, shamefully, I’d probably be inside doom-scrolling on TikTok—not watching in reverie as the world wakes up.

