LITTLE MIAMI SOIL-WORX | LANDSCAPE CASE STUDY

A Garden Reset with Room to Grow

Residential Landscape - Phases 1 & 2 Before & After

A thoughtful landscape restoration that kept the established character, reclaimed the overgrown edges, and created a cleaner foundation for the planting phase still to come.

LITTLE MIAMI SOIL-WORX

Landscape restoration | Arborist-informed tree care | Living systems

BEFORE



THE BIG IDEA

The best transformations don't always start over.

This established landscape already had mature trees, useful shrubs, flowering vines, and a backyard with personality. What it needed was clarity: cleaner bed lines, better access, healthier root zones, and enough breathing room to see what should happen next.



The rear yard after Phase 2: defined edges, open sightlines, retained plants, and a clean planting framework.

THE BRIEF

- Clean and redefine existing beds.
- Prune shrubs and trees selectively.
- Rebuild the right-side decorative block edge.
- Reclaim the rear fence line and reduce weed pressure.
- Protect the silver maple and tricolor beech root zones.
- Keep valued plants - then plan the next layer.

Keep what you love. Add what the landscape is missing.

A simple idea that guided every decision in Phases 1 and 2.

PHASE 1 | RESET & DEFINE

Curb appeal without erasing character

Phase 1 concentrated on the everyday view: the front and side beds, established shrubs, and the right-side block border. The goal was a cleaner, calmer landscape that still felt like the same home.



Front/side ornamental bed before cleanup and selective pruning.



After pruning, edge work, cleanup, and fresh mulch.



The right-side bed before the low block border was rebuilt.

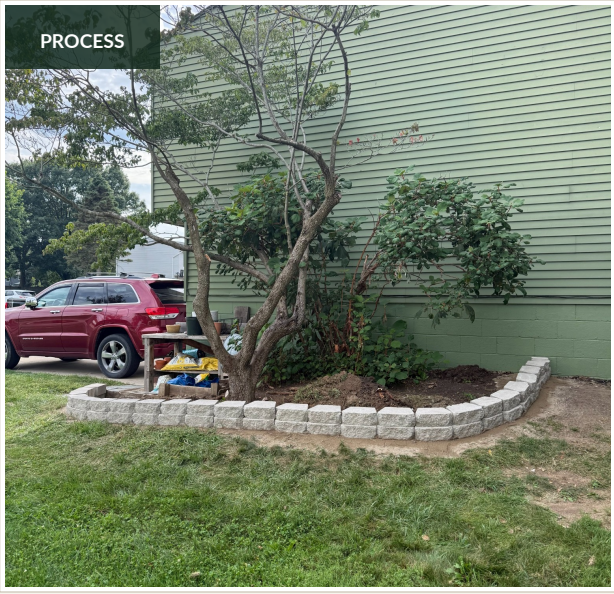


The finished curve gives the bed structure without overpowering the plants.

DESIGN DETAIL

Small structure, big visual payoff

A crisp edge can do more than define mulch. It gives the eye a line to follow and makes established plantings feel intentional again. The new curved block border was laid on a prepared base and finished to sit comfortably with the home rather than compete with it.



During installation: layout, base preparation, and block placement.



Finished block edge with mulch and retained planting.



The front/side landscape after Phase 1: cleaner lines, selective pruning, and dark mulch tying the beds to

A quiet design move

Structure first. Decoration second.

PHASE 2 | RECLAIM & PROTECT

Opening the backyard edge

The rear fence line had become visually crowded and hard to maintain. Selective removals, pruning, edging, grading, weed suppression, and mulch changed the space without stripping away the mature backdrop.



Before: dense growth blurred the fence line and made the edge feel closed in.



After: a sweeping bed line creates access, order, and room for future privacy planting.

The goal was not to clear everything. It was to reveal the landscape that was already there.

Once the clutter was removed, the existing shrubs could become anchors instead of obstacles. The newly defined bed now works as a planting corridor - ready for the privacy and habitat layer planned for Phase 3.

The rear woodland edge needed more than mulch.

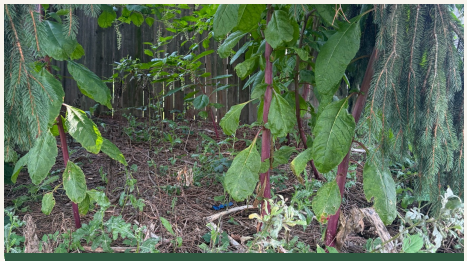
This bed stretches across most of the rear yard beneath mature spruces and a mulberry, with oakleaf hydrangeas and an existing firebush woven through the understory. Before the ground layer could be finished, the canopy itself needed careful arborist work.



BEFORE dense canopy, understory pressure and blurred bed edge



AFTER opened canopy, retained shrubs and a continuous rear bed



UNDERSTORY pokeweed and volunteer growth beneat...



KEEP oakleaf hydrangeas retained as part of th...



GROUNDWORK edge re-cut after vegetation and root-zo...

The arborist work made the bed possible. The bed work made the canopy work visible.

This was the most arborist-intensive portion of the project and one of the largest mulch areas. The finished bed now reads as one connected woodland edge instead of a series of unrelated trees, shrubs and weedy pockets.

Prune overhead. Reclaim below.

The sequence mattered: improve clearance and tree structure first, then rebuild the soil surface and bed edge beneath it. That kept the work focused on both tree health and the way the backyard actually functions day to day.



AFTER rear woodland bed spanning nearly the full backyard width

Canopy first

- Deadwood and lower-limb elevation on both spruces, largely completed from the ground with a pole saw.
- Mulberry deadwood and elevation, plus selective removal of limbs competing with the neighboring spruces for light and space.
- Additional climbing in the mulberry to complete pruning and safely chunk down a larger interfering limb.

Ground layer second

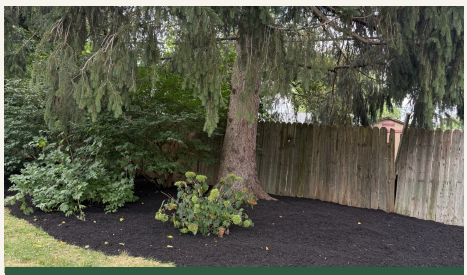
- Preserve the oakleaf hydrangeas and existing firebush.
- Remove unwanted understory growth and redefine the bed edge.
- Use cardboard / underlayment where appropriate, then apply a substantial mulch layer across the long bed.



PROCESS cardboard suppression staged beneath...



PROCESS mulch installed over the suppression lay...



FINISH retained hydrangeas and mature trees in...

Why this section matters

A large landscape bed under mature trees is not simply a mulching job. Here, canopy clearance, deadwood removal, selective competition reduction, understory cleanup and bed reconstruction all had to work together. The result is easier to maintain now and gives Phase 3 a much clearer framework for future privacy and planting decisions.

TREE CARE MEETS LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Giving two important trees more breathing room

The silver maple and tricolor beech received broad mulch-ring resets designed around the trees, not around a decorative mulch pile. Turf was removed carefully, the root zones were widened, and mulch was kept away from the trunks so the root flare remains visible.



Turf crowding the base.



A wider protected mulch zone.



Tricolor beech before.



Tricolor beech after.

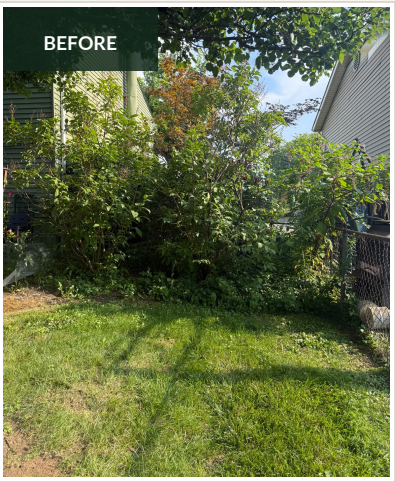
WHY THIS MATTERS

- Less mowing and string-trimmer pressure close to the trunk.
- A protected soil surface that stays cooler and holds moisture more evenly.
- No mulch piled against the bark.
- A better foundation for future "soft landing" plantings beneath the trees.

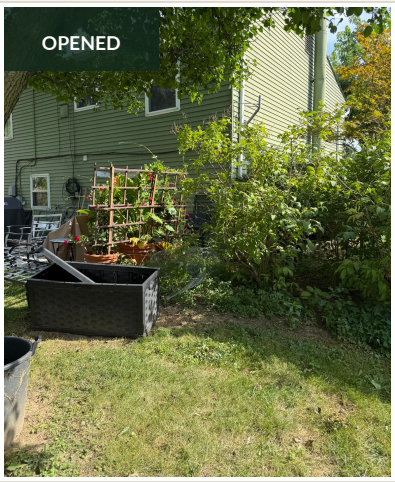
AN EXTRA BED, ADDED ALONG THE WAY

A small area that needed patient hand work

One additional bed around existing wisteria and hydrangeas was brought into the project after work was underway. Wild violet, prickly lettuce, and pokeweed had filled the space; the violet rhizomes in particular required careful hand removal around the plants being kept.



Dense growth obscured the bed shape.



After opening the area, retained plants became visible.



Fresh edging and selective excavation.



Mulch completed the reset.



Root and turf material removed by hand rather than simply buried under mulch.

WHAT MADE IT DIFFERENT

This was less "pull a few weeds" and more selective bed reclamation. The work had to remove persistent underground growth while preserving the established vines and shrubs the homeowner wanted to keep.

The result is a clean, simple bed that looks finished now and can be adapted later as the rest of the planting plan develops.

REUSE BEFORE REPLACE

Old pond stone becomes a garden feature

Instead of hauling away the stones left from an earlier pond, the final Phase 2 cleanup turned them into a low, informal feature against the wood fence. Larger rocks that had been scattered through the bed were also repositioned as simple visual anchors.



The broad bed before the stone arrangement was finalized.



Reclaimed stones arranged into a low garden feature.



The stonework gives the open mulch field an anchor while leaving plenty of room for the living layer to come.

THE PHASE 2 REVEAL

Cleaner now. Easier to care for. Ready for the next layer.



10 cu yd	26 ft 3 in	2	1
mulch installed	curved block edging	tree root-zone resets	reclaimed stone feature

The strongest change is not any single feature. It is the way the property now reads as one connected landscape: front beds that feel composed, trees with protected bases, a backyard edge that can be walked and maintained, and open spaces that are ready for thoughtful planting instead of another round of cleanup.

PHASE 3 | REPLANT & REGENERATE

The next chapter starts with the space we can finally see.

The project pauses here on purpose. With the cleanup and reclamation finished, the light, root competition, mature plant structure, and privacy gaps are much easier to read. That makes the next planting conversation more useful - and more personal.



A broad, finished bed now acts as the canvas for privacy, pollinator value, and seasonal color.

WHAT COMES NEXT

- Walk the finished site together and identify the privacy views that matter most.
- Finalize plant placement around the shrubs and trees already being kept.
- Select a mix of native and compatible plants that fit the light, moisture, mature size, and desired look.
- Add the living layer gradually - without asking the homeowner to start over.

Little Miami Soil-Worx

Built by the River. Grown for the Long Run.

Robert | ISA Certified Arborist

RESET -> RECLAIM -> REGENERATE