

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Year One or Year Ten? The Planting Lines That Doubled the Quote.

Maturity, species, season and hardscape: the eight decisions behind a landscape render, priced line by line, and the version that shows the same garden for $4,180.

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START HERE

A planting plan is not a picture of one day

A planting plan describes a garden over fifteen years. A render shows it on one afternoon. Most landscape briefs we receive try to show the whole fifteen years at once: every species on the schedule, every season, the trees at planting size and again at full height. Each of those is a reasonable wish, and each is priced separately.

The problem is not ambition. It is that nobody has decided which garden the image is selling. A buyer walking the show home sees year one. An investor deck promises year ten. A planning officer may compare the image with the plan line by line. Those are three different pictures, and a brief that asks for all of them gets a quote for all of them.

	WHAT THE BRIEF ASKS FOR	WHAT ACTUALLY DECIDES THE PRICE
01	**Planting 'exactly as per the schedule'**	How many species a viewer can actually identify at this camera distance
02	**Year one and year ten**	Which one stage the image must be judged on
03	**All four seasons**	The season you launch or sell in
04	**Hardscape to the setting-out drawings**	Whether paving joints are visible in any of the chosen views

Choose the garden before you choose the angles.

One maturity stage, one season and a short list of signature plants will describe the scheme more clearly than a schedule of forty species. Everything else in the frame can be matched by habit, height and colour, and it reads as the same garden.



Maverick Frame production render.

THE INVOICE

What the planting adds to the bill

Below is a composite of the landscape briefs we received this year, priced at mid-market studio rates: a residential courtyard scheme with five garden views. The first five lines are the scheme. The last three are the planting questions, and they cost as much again.

	LINE ITEM	BASIS	AT STUDIO RATES
01	Five eye-level garden views, daylight	5 x $450	**$2,250**
02	An aerial plan view of the whole scheme	1 x $550	**$550**
03	Hardscape modelled to the setting-out drawings	paving	**$900**
04	Water feature with simulated flow	simulation	**$700**
05	Two night views with the lighting scheme	2 x $400	**$800**
06	Every species on the schedule modelled	42 x $60	**$2,520**
07	The same five views at year one and year ten	5 x $300	**$1,500**
08	Spring, autumn and winter of the hero view	3 x $400	**$1,200**
	The scheme itself		$5,200
	The planting questions		+ $5,220
	What the brief asks for		**$10,420**
	What the same garden needs		**$4,180**

What the garden needs: the five views and the aerial plan ($2,800), hardscape to the drawings ($900) and eight signature species modelled exactly (8 x $60 = $480), at one maturity stage and one season. Everything else is matched from the library.

Thirty-four of those species are a green blur at this distance.

At eye level across a courtyard, a viewer recognises the tree, the hedge and perhaps six plants in the foreground bed. The other thirty-four are paid for individually and read as texture.

LINE BY LINE

Year one, year ten and the seven others

Eight lines in a landscape brief carry most of the cost. Rewrite them like this and the quote drops by more than half without losing a single view you would publish.

	IN THE BRIEF	WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD
01	**Year one and year ten**	Name one stage. Sales usually show the garden a few years in, when it looks settled; if the image will be compared with the plan, show the stage the plan promises and label it.
02	**Every species on the schedule**	Mark the plants a visitor would recognise by name: specimen trees, feature shrubs, the foreground bed. The rest can be matched by habit, height and colour.
03	**All four seasons**	Pick the season you sell in. A seasonal set is a second commission, best ordered once the first set has done its job.
04	**Hardscape to the setting-out drawings**	Say which views show paving close up. Only those need joints, kerbs and edgings drawn exactly.
05	**Water feature with flow**	A still image needs a convincing surface, not a simulation. Keep simulation for animation.
06	**Night views with the lighting scheme**	One dusk view of the hero space usually shows the lighting better than two night views.
07	**Lawn, meadow and ground cover**	Say which areas are mown lawn and which are meadow. Long grass behaves differently and changes the mood of every frame.
08	**Neighbouring gardens and boundaries**	Say whether the view over the fence matters. Generic surroundings cost a fraction of modelled neighbours.

THE ONE PAGE

What landscape architects actually send us

The clients whose logos sit on our service pages do not send planting schedules as briefs. They send something close to this, usually in the body of an email, with the plan attached, and it is enough to quote from and to start work.

01	**The scheme**	One line, plus the landscape plan and the architecture model if there is one.
02	**What it is for**	Sales, planning, a competition, a show home. This decides the stage and the angles.
03	**How many views**	A number, or where each image will be published.
04	**Which spaces matter**	Mark them on the plan: the entrance, the courtyard, the view from the terrace.
05	**The maturity stage**	Year one, a few years in, or full maturity. One answer.
06	**The season**	The one you launch or sell in.
07	**Signature plants**	Five to ten species a visitor must recognise. Photographs help.
08	**Hardscape close-ups**	Which views show paving, walls or decking at close range.
09	**The date you need it**	The real one, not the comfortable one.
10	**The budget**	A figure or a range. It is the fastest way to a fitting scope.

Send the plan, not the schedule

A marked-up landscape plan with the signature plants circled tells us more than a forty-row spreadsheet. We read the schedule for heights and habit, and model exactly what you circled.

Photographs beat species names

A phone photo of the tree you mean, or a picture from a nursery catalogue, settles more than a Latin name. Two plants with the same name can look very different at the size you will plant.

WHAT THINGS COST

Market rates and our terms, so you can check any quote

Ranges seen across the market in 2026, freelancer to studio. Use them to sanity-check any quote, including ours.

DELIVERABLE	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	$100 - 300	$250 - 600
Single interior still	$120 - 350	$300 - 700
Package of 5 - 8 views	$600 - 1,500	$1,500 - 4,000
Animation, per minute	$1,000 - 3,000	$3,000 - 8,000

Our standard timelines and revision terms. They are what we quote unless a project needs something else, and we say so before work starts.

STAGE OR DELIVERABLE	MAVERICK FRAME STANDARD
First draft of a still	3 to 5 working days from a complete brief
Finished stills, package of 5 - 8	2 to 3 weeks, drafts included
Animation, up to one minute	4 to 6 weeks, storyboard and preview first
Revision rounds included	Two at draft stage, one on the final image
What counts as a round	One consolidated list of comments, sent at once
Rush delivery	Half the time for about 40% more, when the schedule allows

Line up a studio before the deadline is on fire

The most expensive projects we see are not the badly briefed ones. They are the ones briefed in a panic, after the first supplier failed and the launch date did not move. Vet one or two studios while nothing is urgent.

A note on in-house: one artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation and a stack of adjacent skills - modelling, lighting, post-production and client communication. It pays off only when that person is busy every day. Below that, the arithmetic favours outsourcing on its own.

NEXT

Send us what you already have

Plans, a model, photographs or a draft brief, in whatever state they are in. We will reply with a scope, a price and the questions that decide it - as a reply, not a sales call.

The contact form	maverickframe.com/contacts/
Landscape work	maverickframe.com/services/landscape-rendering/
Or simply	reply to the email this guide arrived in.

Written by the people who read these briefs

Dim Kuzmenko is a co-founder of Maverick Frame Studio. The figures in this guide come from our own inbox and our own rate card, not from an industry survey.