



LANDSCAPING ACTIVITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL BEAUTIFICATION OF NIGERIAN HOMES: END TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The views of our forefathers to plant various species of trees and herbs around their houses were narrow in scope. But with improvement in civilization and education, landscaping activities came into existence. This research work examines the prospect of landscaping activities and the use of various species, of trees and herbs with their aesthetic qualities for environmental beautification in Nigerian houses. The investigation involved a group of landscapers, students of higher institutions of learning, foresters and horticulturists. The result showed to-some extent that with adequate implementation, the programme stands a better chance to make our environment habitable, improve the living standard of many people and turn Nigerian "garbage cities" to "garden cities".

KEYWORDS: Landscaping, foresters, horticulturists, civilization, environmental beautification

INTRODUCTION

The general ideas of landscaping and environmental beautification were as old as man and it started with nature. This was when God commanded plant species into existence to form beautiful landscapes in their natural habitats. The consciousness and careful manipulation of plants species for the benefits of mankind brought about the development of gardening. This involves the planting of herbs, shrubs, trees, flowers, grasses and hedges. People have designed garden throughout the recorded history. Thousand years ago in Egypt and Babylon, there were planted architectural structures. The roots of renaissance garden extend back to the tradition of antiquity, especially those of ancient Rome. Landscaping is an important sector which had gained more popularity in recent years in Nigeria. Despite



this development, it cannot be compared with what is obtainable in the developed nations of the world in terms of development, quality, patronage and boom experienced in the landscape horticulture industry.

In Nigeria from the time immemorial people consciously and unconsciously add physiographic and environmental characteristics to the land around them either for aesthetic gratification or environmental enrichment and protection. With improvement in civilization couple with education, the concept of gardening was widened to include the use of iron rods, cement, wood and soil aggregates to construct fences, flower pots, walkways and driveways. Today, gardening processes are referred to as landscaping.

It is crystal clear that human activities such as industrialization, urbanization, mining, infrastructure development and agriculture have been exerting pressure on the land mostly in urban centers. Consequently, the environment has been deteriorating over large plants of the country (Adams, et al, 2002)

The increase in population also led to the indiscriminate removal of vegetation and felling of trees for human consumption which have resulted to severe land degradation. The effect of this land degradation include erosion, loss of important plants and tree species with other environmental problems.

The use of space is limited having cleared the vegetation for the purposes of constructing roads and erecting buildings in the urban areas, the vegetation that has the capacity for protective, aesthetic and or medicinal purpose among others should be re-established (Adams, et al, 2002) Landscaping programme therefore have great potentials to solve some of these problems and also add beauty and protection to the environment.

Landscape design is more than just a cosmetic treatment to be applied to indifferent or insensitive architectural or engineering in order to soften and harsh edges or disguise and awkward layout. It is to integrate structures into the environment by reducing the visual intrusiveness, by repairing damage to the existing vegetation and more positively by providing a setting that is attractive and welcoming.

Landscaping is the art and science of developing the outdoor environment using soft landscaping e.g ornamental plants and hardscapes e.g non-plant objects, components to serve the needs and desires of people. It serve both the aesthetic and functional purposes.



The outdoor surroundings could be designed with natural or man-made components/materials/objects i.e it could be natural or artificial. Landscaping involves design, construction and maintenance of landscapes. Generally, landscaping is perceived as the art of caring for the environment. Hence the cliché-landscapes of cares (Ibimilua, 2014)

Fadamiro et al (2008) are of a opinion that the environment is an interactive indispensable medium within which man's life performance is carried out and as such landscape elements are important within the built environment.

Landscape planning is an appropriate way of conserving the biodiversity and other components of the landscapes. From this point view, Kanagabsabai (2010) perceived landscaping as a means of maintaining a healthy, clean and pure environment. He emphasized the importance of involving people actively in the protection of the environment and the management of the natural resources.

There are four important stages of modern landscaping which include preliminary investigation, hard landscaping, soft landscaping and maintenance which is very vital and involves weeding, trimming into desired shape, cutting back and watering.

The nature of project that is at hand determines the adoption of any of the stages. The preliminary investigation involves site survey, site analysis and production of landscape plan while hard landscaping involves all aspects of earth works, drainage and outdoor fittings. Soft landscaping entails the use of water and actual planting of trees, ground cover, ornamental plants and grasses.

Various plants at our disposal that are capable of meeting the need of man and enhance environmental beautification include many indigenous and exotic plants. The ability of man to arrange these plants logically gives an overall pleasing effect. This is as a result of the basic knowledge about silvicultural characteristics of plants, their functions or the environmental problems they can solve and how they solve them. Landscaping programmes could be combined with other professions such as cabinet making, teaching, farming and trading to improve one's income and standard of living.

The need for designers wouldn't have arose if human beings had alerted their natural habitat. The natural perfection of nature wouldn't have required any attention if not for modern civilization and technology.



Environmental hazards such as rain storms requires prevention like wind break, shade trees for guide against sun glares and ecological problems with nutritional/medicinal issues calls for landscaping activities

The intent of this study was to examine the prospect of landscaping activities and the use of various species of tree and herbs with their aesthetic qualities for environmental beautification in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The type of research design chosen for the successful accomplishment of this study was the Descriptive Survey because it involves one on one interaction with the respondents. In other words, it is dealing with a current issue in the country. It thus involves the current status of landscaping programmes vis-a-vis its effect on current environmental degradation in the country

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The first samples were drawn from two major populations viz:-Landscapers in their various primary occupations and students of higher institutions of learning. The second sample was drawn from the forester, horticulturists and the general public. These two samples were drawn from Ekiti and Ondo States of Nigeria, this is because Ekiti is the researcher's base while Ondo state is within the catchment area of research where findings can be easily carried out and recommendations be made to manipulate the environment. Selection was based on deliberate sampling technique because not every individual could understand what landscaping are all about. These led to the sampling of four categories of landscapers in various fields, and six higher institutions of learning were selected from the two States.



Check Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 - A list of primary occupations of categories of landscapers.

Professions of landscapers	Expected No. of Respondents (a)	Actual No. of Respondents (b)	% of b/a
Teaching	150	25	16.67
Landscaping	150	90	60
Farming	150	10	6.67
Trading	150	75	50
Total	600	200	33.33

In table 1 above, one hundred and fifty landscapers in each profession are expected to have direct link with the researcher with varied numbers of them that responded to the researcher's investigation. The percentages was calculated by dividing the actual number of respondents with the expected numbers.

It revealed that those in other professions other than landscaping are ignorant of what the profession (landscaping) are all about.

Table 2 - A list of Higher Institutions of Learning

S/N	Names of Higher Institutions	Expected No. of Respondents (a)	Actual No. of Respondents (b)	% of b/a
1	The Federal University of Technology, Akure	250	150	60
2	University of Ado-Ekiti	250	150	60
3	Federal School of Agriculture, Akure	250	220	88
4	Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo	250	150	60



5	The Federal Polytechnic, Ado- Ekiti	250	180	72
6	Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti	250	200	80
		1500	1050	70

In table 2 above, two hundred and fifty students in each of the higher institution of learning in the two states are expected to respond to the researcher's investigation out of many that were served with questionnaires. However, reasonable percentage of them responded.

It was deduced from the table above that students at the Federal School of Agriculture understood better about the benefits attached to landscaping in the society.

Instrumentation

One structures questionnaire was used that is foresters and horticulturist, landscapers view questionnaire (F.H.L.V.Q). The questionnaire was designed to investigate the effects of landscaping programme on environmental and living conditions of Nigeria populace

The Likert - type of ranking was adopted thus:

S.A. - Strongly Agree (ranked 5)

A = Agree (ranked 4)

U = Undecided or Neutral (ranked 3)

D = Disagree (ranked 2)

S.D. - Strongly Disagree (ranked 1)

The questionnaires were self-administered. Despite this self-administration, most of the questionnaires were not returned. A pure descriptive form of analysis was used in analyzing the available data. After the collection of all the responses, each item on the questionnaire was tabulated on a code sheet. The groupings of S.A. and A, scoring 5 and 4



respectively were put together as Agree, while that of D and S.D. scoring 2 and 1 respectively were put together as Disagree. Neutral was left as 3.

The scores of all the items were coded with a view to determining the total number of Agreements, Neutral and Disagreements from the respondents. Later, scores for each i.e. Agreement, Neutral and Disagreement were extracted and added together. On each item therefore, it was possible to know how many respondents agreed, disagreed or were neutral. The next stage was the addition of all the agreements or disagreements or neutral cases, each of the items based on the various groups of problems in question. F.H.L.V.Q had 55 items. The total of agreements. X, for each group was found, the average x, based on the number of items of each group NG was also found,

$$\text{i.e. } x = \frac{X}{NG}$$

Where x = average number of agreement/disagreement/neutral. X = number of agreement/disagreement/neutral and NG = number of items in that group.

In order to get the various percentages from which results could be deduced, the average x , for each agreement/disagreement/neutral was divided by the total number NG of respondents and multiplied by 100,

$$\therefore \text{Percentage for agreement for instance} = \frac{X}{NG} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

The exercise was done each for the group of the problem in question and for the group of respondents i.e. Landscapers, Students of Higher Institutions, horticulturists and the general public.

Results

The results are shown in two stages.

In the first instance, the different groups of subjects involved and the second stage is in relation to the problem already stated in this study.

STAGE 1

Effect of landscaping programmes on environmental beautification and protection of houses in Nigeria.

Table 3 shows the views as expressed by the foresters and horticulturists. 120 out of 150, representing 80% are, of the opinion that the programme will help to solve the problems of



environmental degradation, ensure environmental beautification and protect Nigerian houses from natural disaster such as storm.

Table 3 -Summary of the effect of landscaping programmes on environmental beautification.

Table 3: Analysis of respondents report

	Average X	%
Agree Neutral	120	80
Disagree	30	20
	-	-
Total	150	100

Only 30 were undecided

Table 4 shows the views as expressed by the different categories of landscapers in various fields. An average of 200 landscapers out of every 300 representing 66.67% feel that landscaping programmes will have positive effect on the living standard of the entire populace and create room for aesthetic and environmental improvement in all Nigerian houses while 80 and 20 out of 300 disagreed and were neutral respectively.

Table 4: Summary of the effect of landscaping programmes on environmental Beautification.

Table 4: Analysis of respondents report

	Average X	%
AGREE	200	66.67
Neutral	20	6.67
Disagree	80	26.66
Total	300	100

Table 5- shows the result of the views as expressed by students of higher institutions of learning on the effect of landscaping programmes on environmental beautification.



Table 5- Summary of the effect of landscaping programmes on environmental beautification

Table 5: Analysis of respondents report

	Average X	%
Agree	1020	56.67
Neutral	80	4.44
Disagree	700	38.89
Total	1800	100

1020 out of every 1800 students, representing 56.67% believed that the programmes will solve the problem of environmental degradation to a large extent while 80 were neutral and 700 disagreed.

STAGE II

This stage considered the result in relation to the question earlier stated, that is, will landscaping programmes in anyway help to solve the problems of environmental degradation and enhance aesthetic and environmental beautification in Nigerian houses?

Table 3, 4, and 5 have summarized the results as having effect on environmental degradation by reducing it and improve our environment and the living conditions of many Nigerians.

DISCUSSION

This study has made an attempt to find solution to certain problems with regards to landscaping activities. Results have shown that the study has succeeded in answering the question earlier raised. The discussion is based on the importance of landscaping programmes to environmental beautification and protection.

From the findings of this investigation, one might begin to breathe a sigh of relief that a probable cure for weather and environmental degradation, in no distant future is at hand.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A lot of implications are attached to this study for further research despite its fulfillment in solving the salient issue earlier raised. The numerous benefits derivable from plants in Nigerians houses are beautification, erosion control, shade, fencing, hedges with



the socio-economic benefits which include provision of employment and generation of income which must be properly executed and maintained. However, the following recommendations are made

- (i) Landscaping institutions should be established by the government to train manpower who will create employment and protect our environment.
- (ii) Landscape designers should not work in isolation, they should employ the services of other experts in relevant fields like Arts, Electrical, Building and Soil Sciences.
- (iii) Government buildings and roads should be landscaped and properly maintained. House owners should be encouraged to plant various species of grasses, shrubs, flowers and trees in their compound with improved awareness on they are playing in human life.

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