

Lettering

Lecture 5

The Art of Lettering

It is not enough to be able to draw attractive symbols and flowing bedlines for a finished drawing. Lettering your words with an artistic style is just as important to the overall appearance.

Every designer adds his or her own personal touch to lettering, but there is a quality to landscape design lettering that is common. First, there is looseness to the lettering style that is quite different from engineer drafting (Figure 4-1). Engineer drafting is often very regimented and precise. Each letter has specific guidelines on how it is spaced. It is a very formal style.

Landscape design lettering has a flowing quality that communicates a stylish flair, mimicking the flowing bedlines and staggered plantings (Figure 4-2). The letters may be more formal in appearance-being more square and exact-but still drawn loosely and quickly. Usually, landscape design lettering has an informal quality. It is often easy to spot someone who has design experience by the way he or she writes.

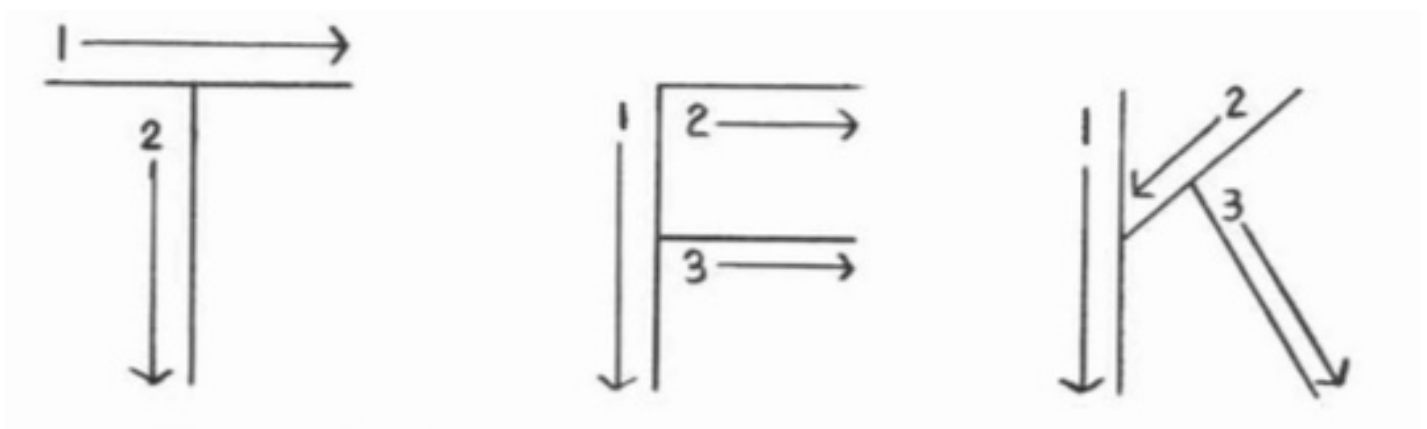


Figure 4-1 Formal Drafting Letters conform to strict guidelines.



Figure 4-2 Landscape Design Lettering

Has a stylish informality that lends aesthetic appeal to plan drawing.

Guidelines to Good Lettering

Even if you do not have good handwriting, there are a few rules you can follow that will improve your lettering.

Words Are Printed

Printing creates very legible writing (Figure 4-3). Stylistic writing is appealing, but more importantly there should be no confusion as to what is written due to style. Cursive writing can appear too informal, as well as be difficult to read.

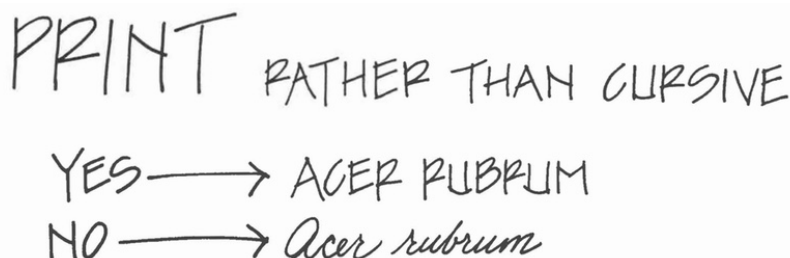


Figure 4-3 Printed

Letters Cursive writing can be difficult to read as well as sloppy.

Lettering Guidelines

Guidelines will keep the letters consistent in size and level across the paper (Figure 4-4). A bottom guideline is used to keep lettering oriented in a straight line across the paper. The top guideline keeps letters consistent in height. A middle guideline is sometimes used for larger letters to keep the middle portions of the letters consistent.

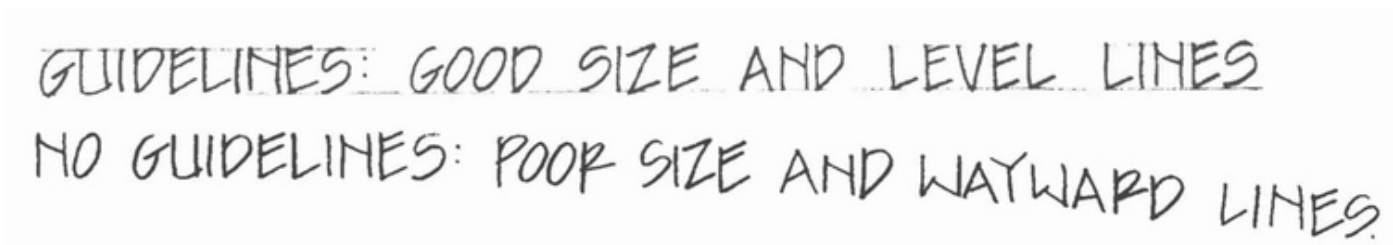


Figure 4-4 Guidelines Keep letters consistent in size and lines level across the paper.

Drawing Guidelines

Use a 4H lead or non-photo blue pencil to draw guidelines, so that they do not show up on a print. There are a number of ways to draw guidelines, one is with an Ames lettering guide (Figure 4-5).

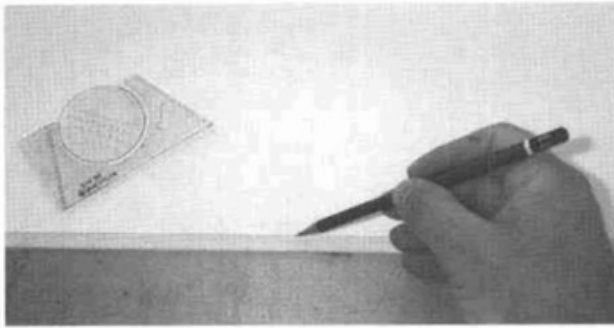
- Draw the baseline across the T-square.
- Without moving the T-square, place the Ames lettering guide on the T-square so that the square side, not the angled side, of the lettering guide is on the left side. Each hole represents 1/8" in height.
- Draw the top guideline at 1/2" by placing the pencil in the fourth hole and sliding the lettering guide across the T-square. (This creates guidelines for 1/2" letters.)
- Draw the middle guideline at 1/4" in the second hole and slide it across the T-square again .

Another approach to drawing guidelines may not be as accurate and easy as the preceding technique:

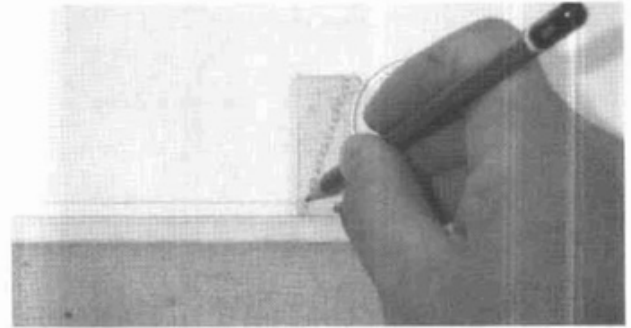
- Mark the top , middle, and bottom lines with a ruler. • Line a T-square on each mark and draw the guidelines across.

Visible Guidelines

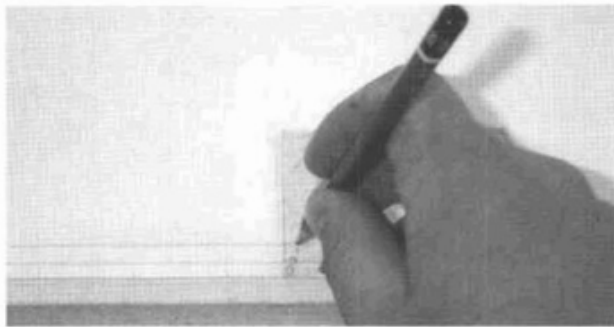
Guidelines are drawn lightly with a 4H lead, so that they will not appear on a copy. Some designers prefer to draw the guidelines darker, so that they *do appear on a copy*. Some feel that the appearance of guidelines lends a professional quality (Figure 4-7) .



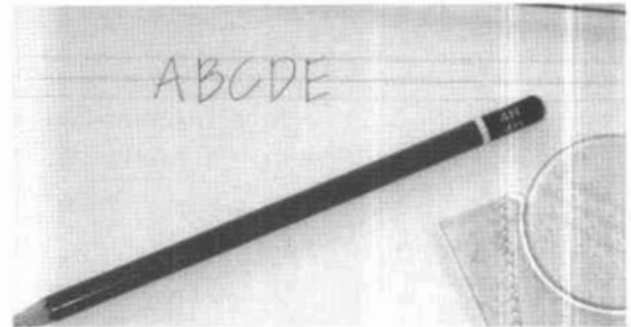
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 4-5 Lettering Guide (a) Draw the baseline on the T-square. (b) Place the lettering guide on the T-square; insert the pencil into the hole for the midline. Holes along the left edge are 1/8" apart. In this figure, letters will be drawn 1/2" tall, so the middle guideline is drawn with the pencil in the second hole, which is 1/4" above the baseline. (c) The top line is placed 1/2" above the baseline. (d) Lettering will follow the bottom and top lines for a level guide across the paper. The midline is a guide for letters that have middle points, such as *B*, *E*, and *F*.

GUIDELINES THAT SHOW

GUIDELINES THAT DON'T SHOW

Figure 4-7 Visible Guidelines Some designers prefer to have the guidelines appear on the copy to lend a professional quality.

Use an H Lead

This lead will give a good line weight without smudging easily.

Draw Solid, Bold Lines

Each line is drawn quickly with solid, crisp strokes (Figure 4-S). The emphasis of each stroke is on the start and finish of the line. *Avoid the wispy ends that trail off.* Do not think about the lines and *trying* to draw them. When the lines are drawn quickly, the lettering takes on an attractive looseness that maintains character.

Pay attention to the width of the line. It should be consistent from start to finish .

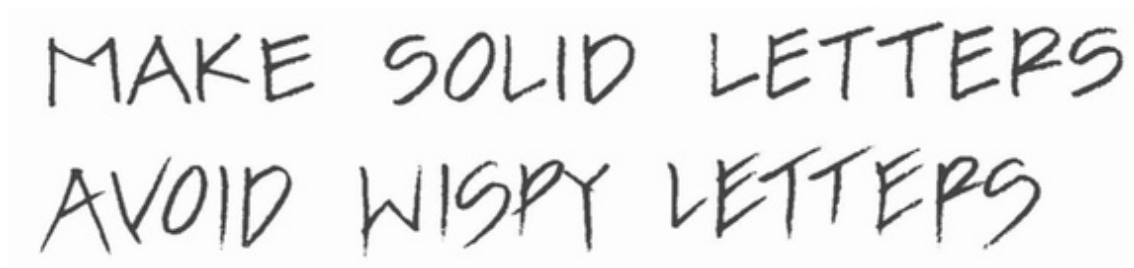


Figure 4-8 Solid Lines Lines should be crisp, so lead must be sharpened often.

Case Consistency

An important rule in good lettering is case consistency between all letters. Use either uppercase or lowercase letters, but do not mix them (with the exception of the first letter in the first word of a sentence) (Figure 4-9) . Uppercase letters are quite often used exclusively, but either one is acceptable.

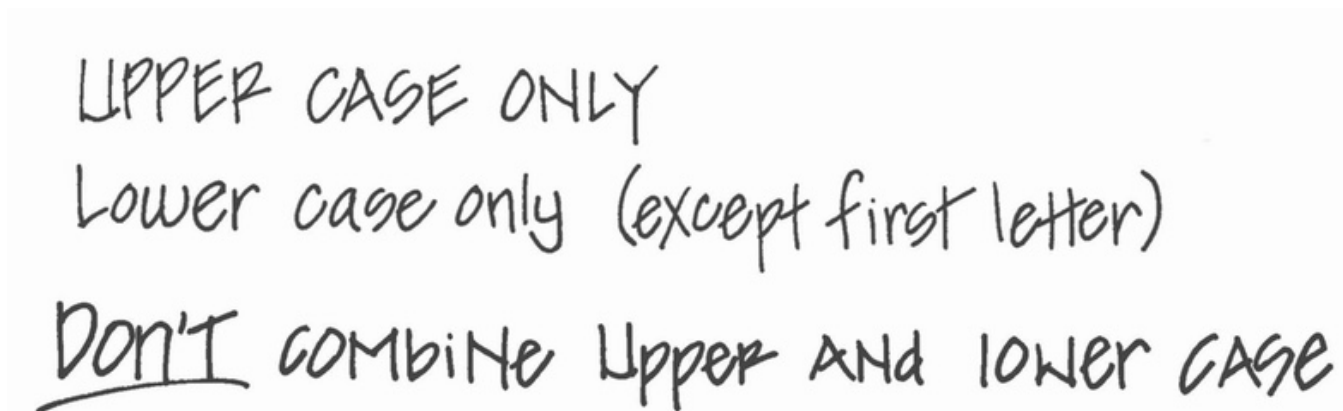


Figure 4-9 Do Not Mix Upper- and Lowercase Letters Most designers use uppercase letters exclusively. Regardless, avoid mixing upper- and lowercase letters, which can look strange as well as cause confusion.

Spacing Between Letters, Words, and Lines

Be consistent with spacing between letters and words. When consistency is present, the lettering takes on a rhythm that is appealing (Figure 4-10). There is no real rule of thumb for spacing between letters because the space varies for letter combinations. The spacing should appear balanced without looking crowded or spaced so wide as to cause confusion. If lines are printed in a block, be sure there is about 1/8" that separates each line.

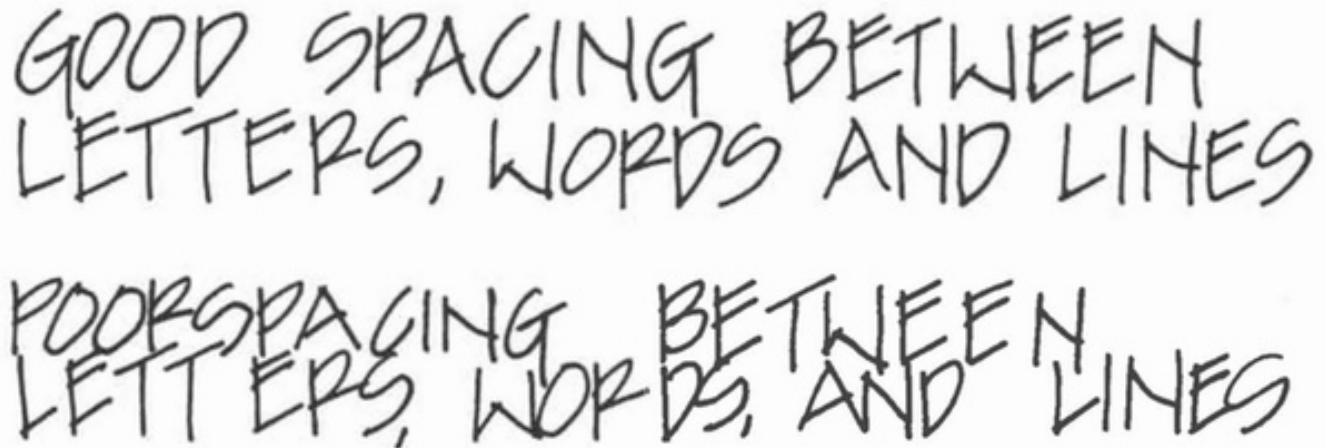


Figure 4-10 Consistent Spacing Between Letters, Words, and Lines Consistent spacing between letters, words, and lines will create a good balance and appealing flow.

Horizontal and Vertical Axes

A good way to ensure style consistency is to pay attention to the horizontal and vertical axes of the letters (Figure 4-11). Most designers letter with a 90-degree vertical axis (no slanting), while the horizontal axis has a slight upward slant; a formal lettering style has no slanting on the horizontal axis. Whatever writing style you use, every letter should conform to the same degree.

Letter Size

Lettering is generally 1/4" tall. This height is done easily without a straightedge (Figure 4-12). Letters may be as tall as 1/2" in areas such as the title block. It will take practice and repetition to get good and consistent lettering. Once the lettering becomes effortless, it is a part of the design process that is fun.

Once you complete a few alphabets at the 1/2" height, draw guidelines for letters that will be 1" and 2" in height. You will notice that lettering with sharp, crisp lines becomes more difficult on larger

letters. In cases where you will be using large letters, use the straightedge of the triangle on the T-square to get quality lines (Figure 4-13) .

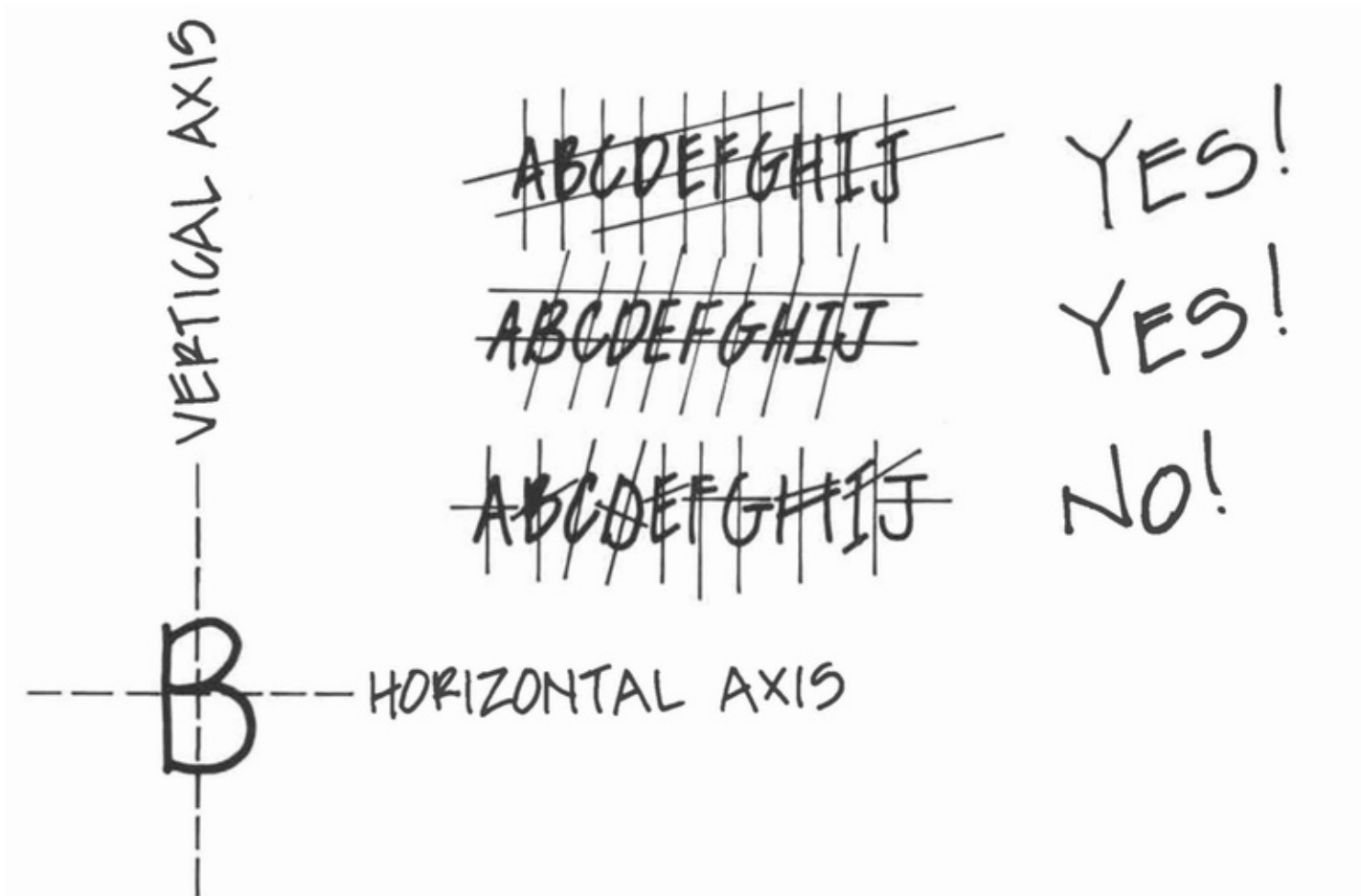


Figure 4-11 Letter Axis Judge letter consistency by the vertical and horizontal axes of all the letters. No matter what angle your axis is drawn, every letter should be consistent.

Hierarchy of Size

Although the majority of the plan is often lettered with 1/4" letters, the size is dictated by the scale of the project as well as the importance of the information. For instance, titles and subtitles are typically larger than the information around them to emphasize importance, in addition to making them easier to read.

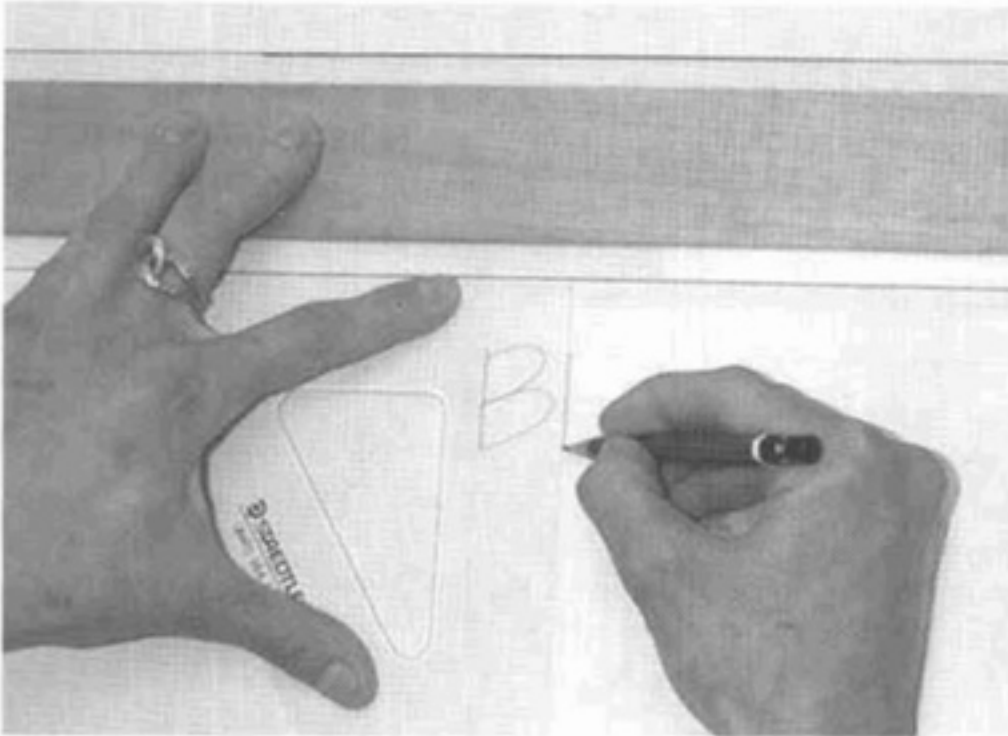


Figure 4-13 Lettering with Straightedge Letters larger than 1/2" can be drawn with the aid of a straightedge.

Word Placement

Labels and blocks of description should be consistent throughout the plan drawing (Figure 4-14). All labels are written on a horizontal plane to be consistent and legible. Short descriptions should be positioned on the plan drawing to be spatially balanced with the weight of the design.

Labeling will be one of the last things placed on the plan drawing. In some cases, it may be prudent to put trash paper over the plan drawing and roughly letter areas of description to be sure there is enough room. Consider word and label placements before drawing to avoid erasing and redrawing.

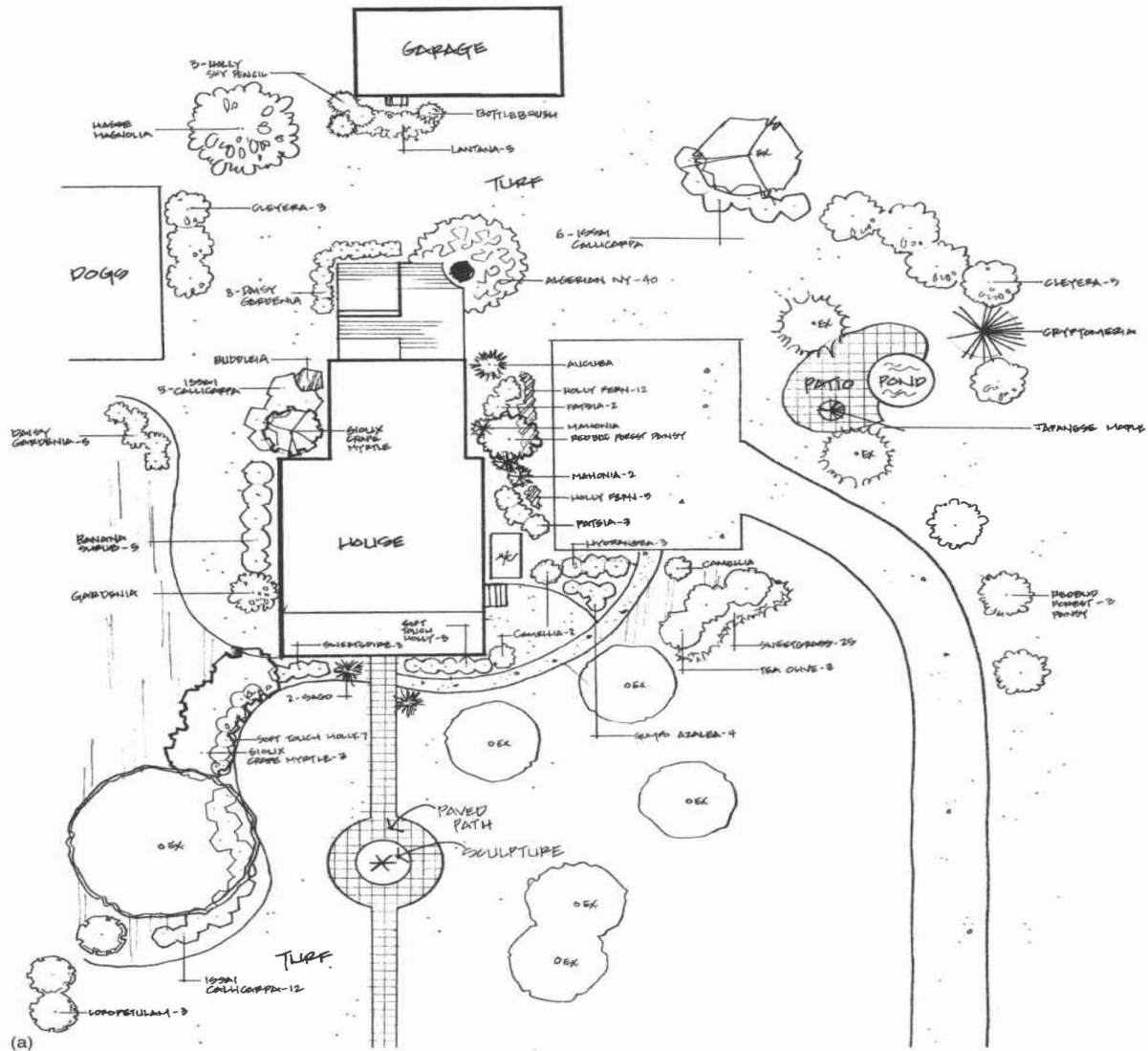


Figure 4-14 Word Placement

Labels and descriptions should be an integral part of the plan drawing, and they should complement the drawing as well as clarify it. (a) These labels are adequate in size and placement, blending with the graphics nicely. (Drawn by Brad Goshorn)

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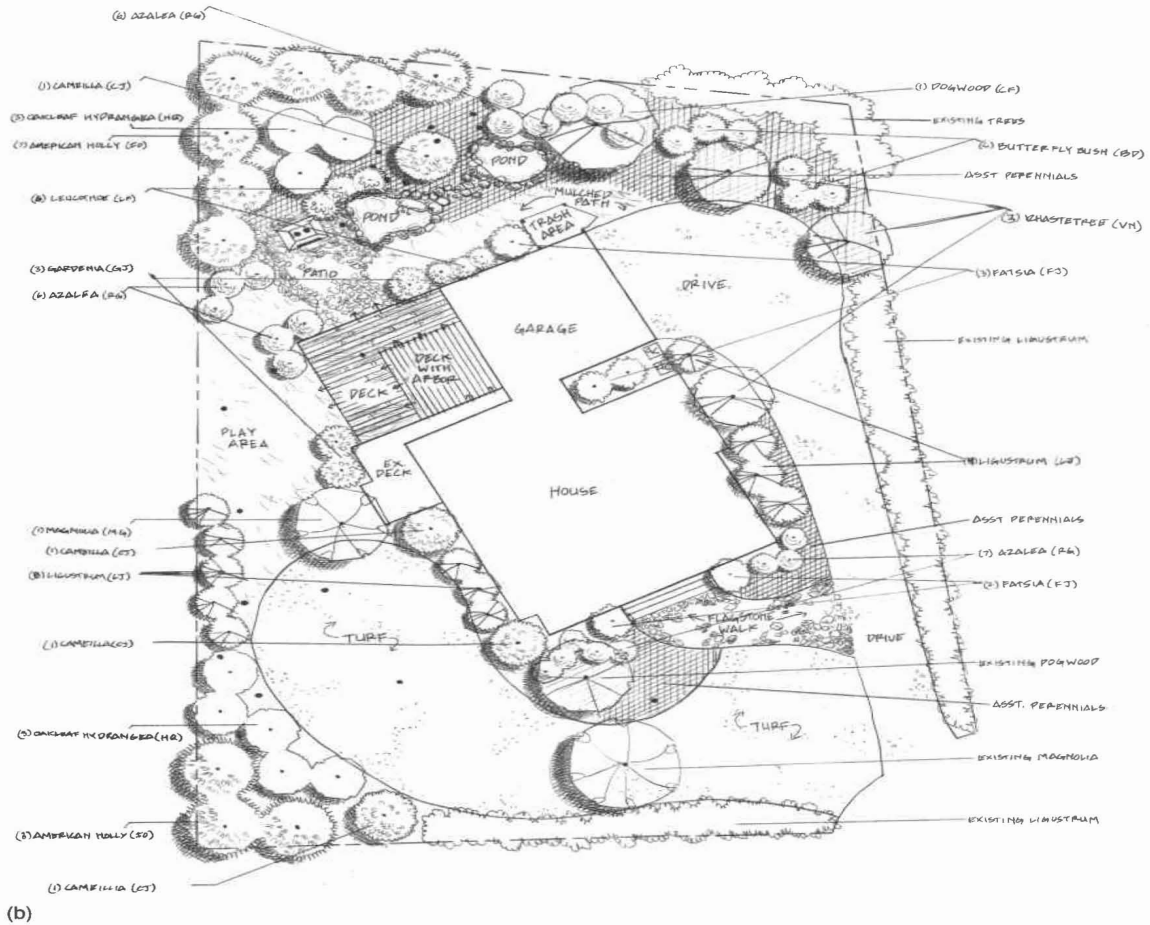


Figure 4-14 Word Placement

(b) The labeling in this design is erratic and distracting in an otherwise nice drawing. (Drawn by Chris Ross)

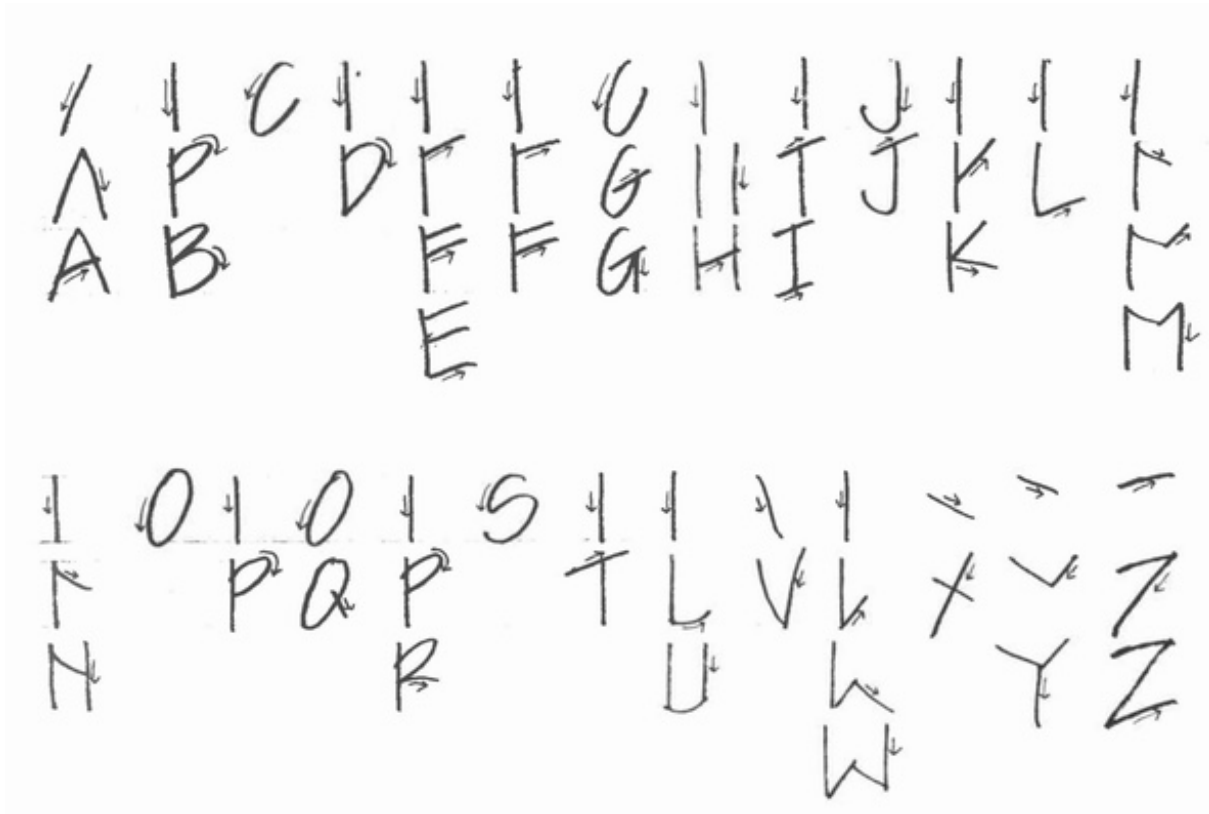


Figure 4.15 Lettering

Crisp, solid lines are important in good-quality letters. Each stroke for these letters is shown in order from start (top) to finish (bottom). Each line should be completed with a brisk stroke, which results in a smooth, bold line.

Informal Letters

Informal letters are upright with a 90-degree vertical axis, but the horizontal axis slants upward a few degrees (Figure 4-16). This is a very common style of lettering in landscape design.

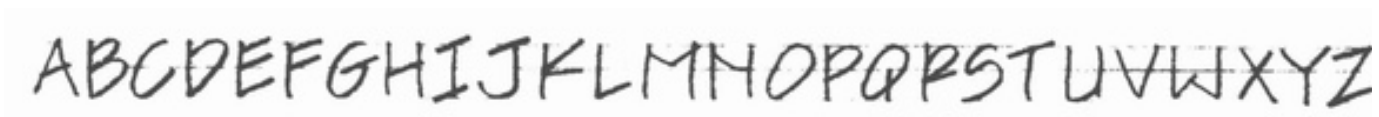


Figure 4-16 Informal Letters

Vertical axis is straight and the horizontal axis slants slightly upward (90 degrees to horizontal) .

High-Gravity Letters

High-gravity letters are created by raising the midline so that the midpoint in all the letters sits higher (Figure 4-17). This style gives an interesting quality to either formal or informal lettering.



Figure 4-17 High-Gravity Letters

Vertical axis is straight and the horizontal axis raised (90 degrees to horizontal).

Low-Gravity Letters

Low-gravity letters are similar to high-gravity letters, but the midline is lowered (Figure 4-18).



Figure 4-18 Low-Gravity Letters Vertical axis straight, horizontal axis lowered.

Slanting Letters

Slanting letters are an informal style of lettering that slants the vertical axis a few degrees (Figure 4-19).



Figure 4-19 Slanting Letters Vertical axis is slanting to the right and the horizontal axis is slanting upward, or 0 degrees.

Stylistic Letters

This style is an informal, loose approach that often breaks the guidelines. The weighted ends and quick strokes lend to the appeal (Figure 4-20).



Figure 4-20 Stylistic Letters Loose lettering style that often breaks the guidelines.

Lowercase Letters

Lowercase letters are not used as much as uppercase letters. They maintain a loose style similar to uppercase letters (Figure 4-21).



Figure 4-21 Lowercase Letters Examples of lowercase.

Numbers

Numbers adhere to the same guidelines as the lettering style (Figure 4-22).

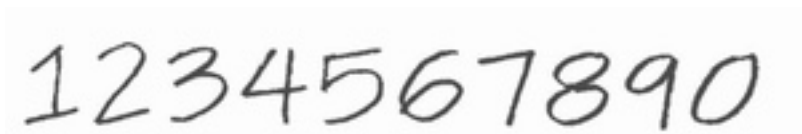


Figure 4-22 Numbers Should follow the same style as lettering.

Block Letters

Informal title blocks may use large block letters about 1" tall . Various details with light line weight add interest (Figure 4-23) .



Figure 4-23 Block Letters Large letters used in some title blocks.