




USING GOOGLE EARTH TO CREATE LANDSCAPE DESIGN BASE LAYER

GOOGLE EARTH (NO INSTALL REQUIRED)

1. **Go to:** <https://earth.google.com>
Click "Launch Earth"
2. **Search Your Address**
 - Click the  search icon (top left)
 - Type your full home address
 - Press **Enter**Google Earth will "fly" to your property.
3. **Zoom In to Your Yard**
 - Use your **mouse scroll wheel** to zoom
 - Or click the **+** **button** on the right side
 - Hold left click and drag to repositionKeep zooming until individual trees, fences, driveways, and garden beds are visible.

Switch to Straight-Down View (Better for Planning)

If the image looks tilted:

- Click the **2D button** (bottom right)
 - Or hold **Shift** and drag the mouse to adjust angle
- For garden planning, straight-down (2D) view is best.

Turn on Useful Layers

Click the **Map Style (paint palette icon)** and turn on:

- Borders & Labels
- Roads
- Places

This helps with orientation.

Zoom Level

Zoom until:

- Entire yard is visible
 - Property edges are clear
 - You can see structures, trees, lawn areas
- Do NOT zoom so far in that you cut off edges.

Measure Your Yard

Click the **ruler icon** → draw lines around:

- Garden beds
- Lawn areas
- Fence lines

This is very useful if you're sketching a xeriscape layout.

Capture the Screenshot

On Mac:

- Press
- **Command + Shift + 4**
- Drag to select just your property.

On Windows:

- Press
 - **Windows + Shift + S**
 - Drag to capture.
- OR use the built-in Screenshot tool.

Crop & Clean

Open the image in:

- Preview (Mac)
- Photos
- Or any basic editor

Crop so only your yard remains.

Save as: **"Yard Base Map – March 2026.png"**

Improve Contrast (Optional but Recommended)

If the image is too dark:

Increase:

- Brightness slightly
- Contrast slightly

You want:

- Lawn areas clearly visible
- Hardscape clearly defined
- Trees distinguishable

Prepare for Planning Overlay

Option A — Print & Trace

- Print at 100 percent
- Overlay tracing paper
- Sketch plant zones, irrigation, mulch areas

Option B — Insert Into Word / PowerPoint

- Insert image
- Lower transparency to ~60 percent
- Draw shapes on top

Add a Scale (Highly Recommended)

- In Google Earth:
- Click the ruler icon
- Measure a known dimension (ex: fence length)

Write it on the image: "Back fence = 18.2 m"

Now your plan has reference scale.

****Alternative: Desktop Version**

You can also download **Google Earth Pro** (free).

Advantages:

- Higher control over historical imagery
- Can save high-resolution screenshots
- Better measurement tools

Download from: <https://www.google.com/earth/versions/>