

CAI - LI Chapter News

Serving Long Island, New York

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HOA LANDSCAPING: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE

By MICHAEL M. MALLIA - VARELLO LANDSCAPING

Managing the landscape needs of a Homeowners Association requires strategic planning, consistent execution, and an understanding of diverse community expectations. As an HOA decision-maker, your responsibility extends beyond maintaining attractive grounds – you're tasked with preserving property values, ensuring resident satisfaction, and managing budget constraints while creating inviting community spaces that residents proudly call home.

Understanding the Scope of HOA Landscape Management

Effective HOA landscape management encompasses multiple components that work together to create a cohesive, attractive community environment. Your role involves coordinating various services while maintaining clear communication channels between stakeholders. Working with a professional landscaping partner ensures comprehensive coverage of all essential areas.

Common Area Management and Enhancement

Community entrances and shared spaces serve as the first impression of your development. These areas require particular attention to detail and regular maintenance. Consider implementing seasonal color programs that provide year-round visual interest while maintaining cost-effectiveness. Your common areas should reflect the community's standards while providing functional spaces for resident enjoyment.

Tree Care and Management

Proper tree management forms a crucial component of your landscape maintenance strategy. Regular assessments help identify potential hazards, maintain healthy growth, and prevent costly emergency services. Professional arborists can develop long-term tree care plans that protect your community's valuable natural assets while ensuring resident safety.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By JOANNA PAWLOWSKA - MAX SECURITY USA AND CAI - LI CHAPTER PRESIDENT 2025



CAI Long Island Chapter's Remarkable Growth: A Message from the Board President

As we spring ahead into 2025, I am proud to reflect on the incredible strides the CAI Long Island Chapter has made over the past year. Through our dedicated "Membership Engagement Program," we have seen unprecedented growth,

strengthened our community, and reinforced our commitment to advancing excellence in community association living.

Exceptional Membership Growth

In 2024, our chapter reached an all-time high of nearly 600 members, marking an outstanding 22.7% growth rate. This achievement places us significantly ahead of national and regional averages—surpassing the Large Chapters' growth rate of 8.6%, the New England Region's 9.9%, and the National average of 8.6%. Even more remarkable is our retention rate of 81.18%, which outperforms other Large Chapters (77.13%), the New England Region (76.3%), and the National average (78.85%).

Empowering Our Homeowner Leaders

A major success of our "Membership Engagement Program" has been the increase in Homeowner Leaders within our membership. In 2024, Homeowner Leaders made up 76% of our total membership—a significant rise from 71% in 2023 and an indicator that our outreach and education efforts are truly making an impact. Over the past decade, this percentage has steadily climbed from 63% in 2014 to our current level, solidifying our role as a trusted resource for community associations.

Enhanced Membership Value and Engagement

Our approach to member engagement extends beyond numbers. We have focused on:

- **Boosting attendance at educational seminars** featuring industry experts, equipping our members with crucial knowledge on laws, regulations, and best practices.
- **Strengthening business partner connections**, ensuring our

members have access to trusted professionals in legal, maintenance, insurance, and other essential fields.

- **Expanding communication efforts** through newsletters, digital content, and a comprehensive membership directory to provide real-time updates and valuable insights.
- **Personalized engagement** via outreach initiatives, ensuring new and existing members feel connected and supported.

The Power of Outreach and Referral Programs

In addition to our enhanced social media presence, we leaned heavily on our "Membership Referral Program," which rewards members with a \$100 Visa Gift Card for successful referrals. In 2024, we awarded nine referral bonuses, underscoring the success of peer-driven growth initiatives.

Looking Ahead to 2025

Building on this momentum, we are committed to further enhancing our digital presence.

As we embark on another promising year, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Board of Directors, Committee Members, Business Partners, and—most importantly—our Homeowner Leaders. Your dedication fuels our success, and together, we will continue to grow, support, and empower communities across Long Island. ■

Warm regards,

Joanna Pawlowska, 2025 President, CAI - Long Island Chapter

You may reach Joanna via at jpawlowska@maxsecurityusa.com or #516.467.9500.

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Creating Sustainable Landscape Solutions

Sustainability in HOA landscaping extends beyond environmental consciousness – it encompasses financial and operational sustainability as well. Your landscape design should incorporate elements that reduce water consumption, minimize maintenance requirements, and provide lasting beauty.

Water Management and Irrigation

Implementing smart irrigation systems helps control water usage while maintaining landscape health. Modern irrigation technology allows for precise water delivery based on weather conditions and plant needs, resulting in significant cost savings over time. Your irrigation strategy should include regular system audits and updates to maintain peak efficiency.

Low-Maintenance Design Solutions

Selecting appropriate plants and materials reduces ongoing maintenance requirements while maintaining aesthetic appeal. Native species typically require less water and fertilizer while providing natural beauty. Consider incorporating hardscape elements that reduce maintenance needs while adding functional value to community spaces.

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Seasonal Considerations and Planning

Your landscape management plan must account for Long Island's distinct seasonal changes. Each season presents unique challenges and opportunities for maintaining community appeal. Professional landscaping services ensure seamless transitions between seasons while protecting your landscape investment.

Winter Preparedness

Winter preparation involves more than snow removal planning. Your landscape should be properly winterized to prevent damage and ensure spring recovery. Consider partnering with a service provider offering comprehensive winter services, including commercial snow removal and ice management.

Spring Revival and Summer Maintenance

Spring services focus on renewal and repair, while summer maintenance ensures consistent landscape appearance during peak usage periods. Your maintenance schedule should include regular mowing, pruning, and fertilization programs tailored to your community's specific needs.

Budget Planning and Value Optimization

Effective budget management requires understanding both immediate needs and long-term landscape objectives. Your landscape investment should deliver measurable returns through increased property values and reduced maintenance costs over time.

Cost-Effective Solutions

Implementing cost-effective solutions doesn't mean compromising on quality. Consider phased improvement projects, strategic plant selection, and preventive maintenance programs that reduce long-term expenses. Professional landscape partners can help identify opportunities for efficiency while maintaining high standards.

Long-Term Planning Benefits

Developing a comprehensive, long-term landscape plan helps optimize resource allocation and improve project outcomes. Your plan should address immediate concerns

while building toward future community goals. Regular assessment and adjustment ensure your landscape strategy remains aligned with community needs and budget constraints.

Partner Selection and Management


Choosing the right landscaping partner significantly impacts your HOA's success. Look for providers with extensive HOA experience, comprehensive service capabilities, and strong communication practices.

Your landscape partner should demonstrate understanding of HOA-specific challenges and regulations.

Service Provider Evaluation

When evaluating potential landscape partners, consider their track record with similar communities, response capabilities, and quality control measures. Request

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Long Island Chapter Calendar of Events

Thursday, June 19th - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Chapter Membership Meeting
with Educational Presentation
"Ask the Security Experts"

Half Hollow Hills Library - Auditorium
55 Vanderbilt Parkway, Dix Hills

Wednesday, July 23rd - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Chapter Membership Meeting
with an Interactive Roundtable Discussion
"A Potpourri of Board Issues"
Summerfield HOA - Clubhouse
74 Summerfield Drive, Holtsville

Tuesday, July 29th - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Meet Our Property Managers...
for Business Partners Only
One10 Restaurant
569 Broadhollow Road, Melville

Thursday, September 25th - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Chapter Membership Meeting
with Educational Presentation
Blue Ridge HOA - Clubhouse
899 Golf Lane, Medford

Saturday, October 25th - 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Annual Trade Show
Free Attendance for Community Board Members
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Saturday, November 8th - 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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CAI - LONG ISLAND NEWSLETTER

The CAI - Long Island Newsletter is published quarterly by the Long Island Chapter of Community Associations Institute (CAI-LI) and is distributed to its members and is available on the Chapter website (www.cai-li.org). This publication provides members of CAI with letters from the Chapter President, informative articles written by industry professionals and service providers, updates on current legislation, and business advertising. The Chapter strives to provide our members with timely information and tools needed to keep them informed on community association issues.

The Newsletter Committee is always looking for new articles to publish. Articles should be educational, non-promotional in nature, and have a suggested word count between 500 and 1,500 words. CAI-LI retains the right to edit articles to conform to content and space requirements.

If you are interested in submitting an article for possible inclusion, please contact Christine M. Majid, Chapter Executive Director, at info@cai-li.org.

Quarterly Deadlines

Winter Issue - January 31

Summer Issue - July 31

Spring Issue - April 30

Autumn Issue - October 31

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SPRING INTO ACTION: ESSENTIAL PLUMBING MAINTENANCE TIPS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

By PHIL DEPAUL, CEO - I-TOM-PLUMBER OF LONG ISLAND



As the winter chill fades and spring blossoms around us, it's a great time to ensure your Long Island property is ready to embrace the warmer months ahead. One crucial aspect that often gets overlooked is plumbing maintenance. A proactive approach can save you from unexpected hassles and costly repairs in the future. Here are essential spring plumbing maintenance tips to help safeguard your

property and address impending issues before they escalate.

Identify and Fix Leaks

Spring is an ideal time to inspect your property for indoor and outdoor leaks. Check faucets, pipes, and under sinks for any signs of water damage or drips. Leaks may not always be visible, so be attentive to unusual water bills or the sound of running water when no appliances are in use. Look for damp or discolored spots on ceilings or walls, musty odors, or a sudden decrease in water pressure. A reputable plumbing company can help pinpoint and fix leaks promptly, preventing water damage and potential mold growth. Quick detection and repair can mitigate further damage, ensuring your plumbing system operates smoothly.

Examine Toilet

Toilets are a common source of leaks and inefficiencies. Inspect the tank and bowl for any visible leaks or cracks. Also, listen for continuous running after flushing. It may indicate a faulty flapper or valve. A local plumber can efficiently diagnose and address toilet issues, optimizing water usage and preventing potential water wastage.

Inspect Water Heater

Now is an opportune time to evaluate the condition of your water heater. Sediment buildup and corrosion can affect its efficiency, leading to increased energy consumption and potential breakdowns. If your water heater is more than 10 years old or exhibiting signs of wear, it might be time to consider a replacement. Upgrading to a newer, energy-efficient model will enhance performance and contribute to long-term cost savings.

Check Indoor and Outdoor Drainage Systems

Inspect sinks, tubs, and other indoor drainage points for potential clogs. Slow drainage or gurgling sounds may indicate blockages. Regular attention helps to keep water flowing

smoothly. However, a professional plumber may be necessary to clear clogs and debris buildup utilizing hydro jets. Spring showers can put a strain on your property's outdoor drainage system. Clear gutters and downspouts of debris to ensure proper water flow. Inspect exterior drains for any blockages and remove accumulated dirt or leaves. Routine maintenance helps prevent water backups and potential flooding, safeguarding your property from water-related issues during heavy rainfall.


Inspect Appliances For Leaks

Check refrigerator, dishwasher, and washing machine connections to avert leaks and water damage. Examine hoses and fittings and confirm they are securely attached. Also, replace any worn or damaged components. Regular assessment can save you from unexpected hassles and costly repairs in the long term.

Maintain Sump Pump

Spring showers bring the potential for increased groundwater, putting your basement or crawl space at risk of flooding. Make


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sure your sump pump is in good working condition by testing it. Pour water into the sump pit and observe the pump's activation. And if it doesn't turn on or seems sluggish, it may be time to contact a trusted plumber for maintenance or a replacement.

Turn On Main Valves to Outside Water Sources

If you shut off outside water sources before winter, it's time to turn them back on. Check that all outdoor faucets and irrigation systems are functioning correctly. Survey for leaks or damaged pipes and promptly repair any issues. This step helps avoid potential water damage and ensures a seamless transition into the gardening and outdoor activities that come with the warmer season.

Assess Water Pressure and Efficiency

While conducting your spring plumbing check, assess the water pressure in your property. Inconsistent pressure could indicate issues with your pipes or water supply. If you're experiencing low water pressure, call a plumbing specialist to identify and address the underlying problem. Moreover, consider installing low-flow toilets and water-efficient fixtures and appliances to conserve water and reduce utility bills.

Conclusion

Taking a proactive approach to plumbing maintenance is a wise investment for Long Island property owners. From addressing leaks, to checking the water heater and preventing clogs, these tips can help you enjoy the season without worrying about unexpected plumbing disasters. Remember, a stitch in time saves nine – prioritize plumbing upkeep now and enjoy a worry-free, well-functioning property throughout the **spring and beyond.** ■

You may contact Phil at longisland@1tomplumber.com, call him at #631.616.9088, or visit the company's website at www.1tomplumber.com/long-island-ny/.

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THE TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW IF YOU'RE NEW TO LAKE & POND MANAGEMENT

By SOLITUDE LAKE MANAGEMENT

If you're a property manager or community leader suddenly tasked with overseeing a lake or pond, you might feel unsure where to begin. Maybe you're new to managing waterbodies altogether, or perhaps you've done so before, but feel you still have a lot to learn. You're not alone—many people in your position find lake and pond management intimidating.

Fortunately, with the right knowledge, you can approach this responsibility with confidence.

These are the top five things you need to know to successfully manage your waterbody, ensure it remains a valuable asset to your community, and help keep residents happy.

1. Most community waterbodies are man-made

Most urban ponds are man-made and designed primarily for stormwater collection. While they may offer aesthetic and recreational benefits like fishing or kayaking, their core purpose is to manage stormwater runoff during heavy rainfall, filter pollutants, and prevent flooding.

Stormwater ponds contain important infrastructure that require regular inspections. Keeping an eye on this equipment—and working with professionals when necessary—is crucial to maintaining the health and function of your stormwater pond.



Neglecting these structures or failing to address potential issues could lead to costly damage, safety risks, and regulatory fines.

2. Lakes and ponds are always changing

Lakes and ponds are dynamic ecosystems influenced by a variety of factors, including seasonal weather shifts, temperature fluctuations, and varying levels of sunlight. For example, warmer temperatures and abundant sunlight can promote nuisance plant or algae growth and diminish dissolved oxygen, which is essential to a healthy waterbody. Additionally,

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detailed service proposals that outline maintenance schedules, communication protocols, and performance metrics.

Communication and Reporting

Establish clear communication channels and reporting requirements with your landscape provider. Regular updates, service documentation, and performance reviews help maintain accountability and ensure service quality meets community standards.

Conclusion

Successful HOA landscape management requires careful planning, consistent execution, and strong partnerships. By focusing on sustainable solutions, seasonal preparedness, and value optimization, you can create attractive, functional community spaces that enhance resident satisfaction and property values. Consider partnering with Varello Landscaping for comprehensive community HOA landscaping services that deliver lasting results for your community. ■

You may contact Michael at mlmallia@varellolandscaping.com, call him at Mobile: #631.355.4237 Office: #631.269.7438, or visit the company’s website at www.varellolandscaping.com.

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practices such as gardening, landscaping, and dog walking can introduce runoff containing fertilizers, pet waste, and other contaminants into the water, creating imbalanced conditions. Environmental changes happen quickly, but with the right management practices in place, you can minimize the impact of these fluctuations.

3. Most urban waterbodies need to be managed

This is a common question for new lake or pond owners, and the short answer is: yes, most require year-round management to stay healthy and meet your specific goals, whether for stormwater collection, resident engagement and recreation, or improved aesthetics and property values. On the other hand, poor management can rouse complaints, create safety risks, and contribute to more serious issues like cultural eutrophication—the accelerated aging process of a waterbody.

Over time, stormwater ponds carry excess nutrients into the water that fuel nuisance weeds and algae and promote muck development. Eventually, the waterbody will fill with muck and sediment until it can’t hold sufficient water levels. Proactive management can help slow this aging process, but it’s also essential to plan for future muck removal solutions like dredging. Dredging helps restore waterbodies to their original depth and volume, but is one of the costliest projects a community will ever face. In addition to ongoing management, budgeting far ahead of time (10-20 years) will help ensure you have the funds in place when the time comes.

4. No two pond management programs are the same

When it comes to lake and pond management, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. This means that even if a neighboring community has a similar pond, their management approach could be completely different. Your custom management program will depend on factors such as the pond’s size, the surrounding landscape, and your budget. A program focused on keeping water clear and aesthetically pleasing will look very different from one aimed at creating fun fishing opportunities. Likewise, a waterbody surrounded by trees has different needs than one near a well-manicured lawn.

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Effective programs are designed with all of these factors in mind.

5. Algae and pond weeds are symptoms of underlying problems

Aquatic weeds and algae are often viewed as isolated issues, but they're actually visible signs of water quality imbalances, such as high nutrient levels or dissolved oxygen deficiencies, or of underlying problems like muck accumulation. While reactive strategies like herbicides and algacides can safely eliminate nuisance growth, they provide only temporary relief.

A preventative approach is essential to maintain lasting water quality balance. In addition to regular water quality monitoring tests, proactive solutions like nutrient management can help reduce the availability of nutrients in the water, limiting the potential for future growth. Fountains, surface aerators, and submersed aerators can help increase circulation and dissolved oxygen, making the waterbody more resilient to imbalances. Furthermore, mechanical hydro-raking can be used to scoop out nutrient-rich muck and debris in areas with severe accumulation.

Even for those managers who may be familiar with pond management best practices, there are always new innovations in water management to discover. Emerging photocatalyst solutions are now being used to help remove muck build-up, increase depth, and restore balanced water quality. These environmentally-friendly options help break down muck and decay, leaving behind sand and a more balanced ecosystem. The toolbox of proactive management solutions is large and an experienced professional can help you incorporate these and many other sustainable tools to ensure lasting waterbody health.

The journey of lake and pond management doesn't have to be overwhelming—it can be a rewarding opportunity to showcase your professional expertise and dedication to your community. With the right knowledge, you can create a thriving waterbody that elevates your community's appeal, value, and reputation for years to come. ■


Want to learn more about this topic? Please contact SOLitude Lake Management at #888.480.5253 or visit solitudelakemanagement.com.



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CAI Long Island Chapter Board Leadership Development Workshop Saturday, May 3, 2025

Presented by Jill Colom, Senior Property Manager - CAMCO Services of NY, Inc.

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