Developing a Basemap

What is a Basemap?
A basemap is also called a site map or site plan. The basemap is a communication tool for you and the people helping you. It will help you visualize the project. It will help direct what needs to be done on site as well as open up the possibilities of what can be done. Accurate design and ordering of materials is an essential product to the design process.

A. Survey your site
   1. Building structures – house, garage, pool, patios
   2. Assess existing plant material:
   3. Trees to be saved
   4. Shrubs, plants to be saved or transplanted
   5. Plants you want to remove

   6. Existing structures and utilities on site: underground, ground level and above
      a. Call 311 for a DIGGER request in the city of Chicago
      b. Call 1-800-892-0123 JULIE request in the suburbs
   7. Neighboring structures that will affect your site
   8. Property lines
   9. Soil conditions
      a. Water drainage on site
      b. Topography or slopes

B. Basemap
You will need pencil, erasers, architect or engineer's scale, grid paper, clipboard
Lay out all the existing features on your site. Plot out on paper the project's property. Draw the map to scale, smaller properties can be drawn 1/8 or 1/10 scale. Mark a north arrow for orientation.
   1. Draw what you surveyed initially on the basemap.
   2. Make notes for where the sun or shade is on the property: full sun = 6 + hours of direct sun per day, partial sun = 3-6 hours direct sun per day, partial shade = less than 3 hours of direct sun per day, full Shade = no direct sun exposure
   3. Take note of wind patterns, exposed, sheltered,
   4. End user view of the garden: inside and outside views.
   5. Paths: pedestrian, vehicles, bicycles
   6. Existing lights
   7. Water sources
   8. Parking areas
   9. Tool sheds, garages
   10. Zoning / building regulations
   11. Neighbors

C. Site analysis
   1. Dream and create what is possible on the site.
      a. What will be kept?
      b. What is to be transformed?
      c. What do you want hidden? In plain site?

2. Interview the end users

Knowing what your goals are will help direct your design.

Assess everyone that will be on site: owners, pets, neighbors, relatives, guests, and service people.

For the primary users ask what is important and how important:

1. privacy
2. security
3. recreation: quiet reading corner, impromptu soccer field, barbecue parties for the block party
4. maintenance level: gardening as a hobby, hiring help, # of family helping
5. producing fruits and vegetables
6. conserving resources: water, sun, fuel
7. sun / shade = suntanning / protection from sunburn
8. parking
9. pets
10. clothes drying
11. wildlife diversity
12. storage space: tools, toys
13. compost bins
14. water feature: bird bath, fountain, pool

E. How do I start?

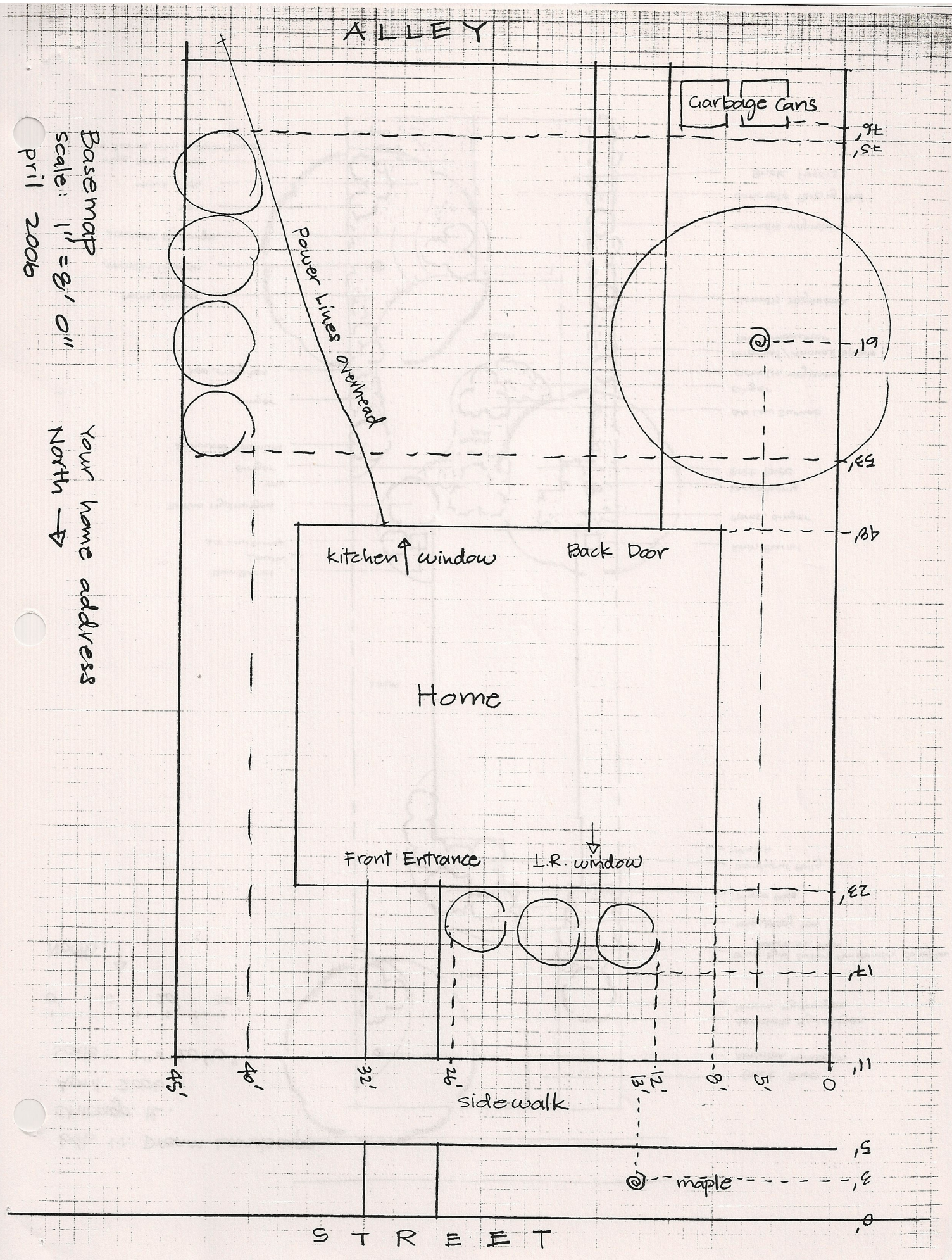
Most base maps are drawn in plan view. Plan view shows length and width. Plan view is drawn from the perspective of a flying bird or if you were in an airplane looking down at the ground. Sectional and elevation views are different from plan view. Sectional view shows height, length and width.

Drawing to scale: Landscape drawings can communicate to anyone picking up the basemap exactly where all the buildings, plants and other structures should be. Landscape designs for residential use are typically drawn in 1/8, 1/10 or ¼ scale. 1/8 inch on paper = 1 foot on the ground, 1/10 inch on paper = 1 foot on ground, ¼ inch on paper = 1 foot on ground

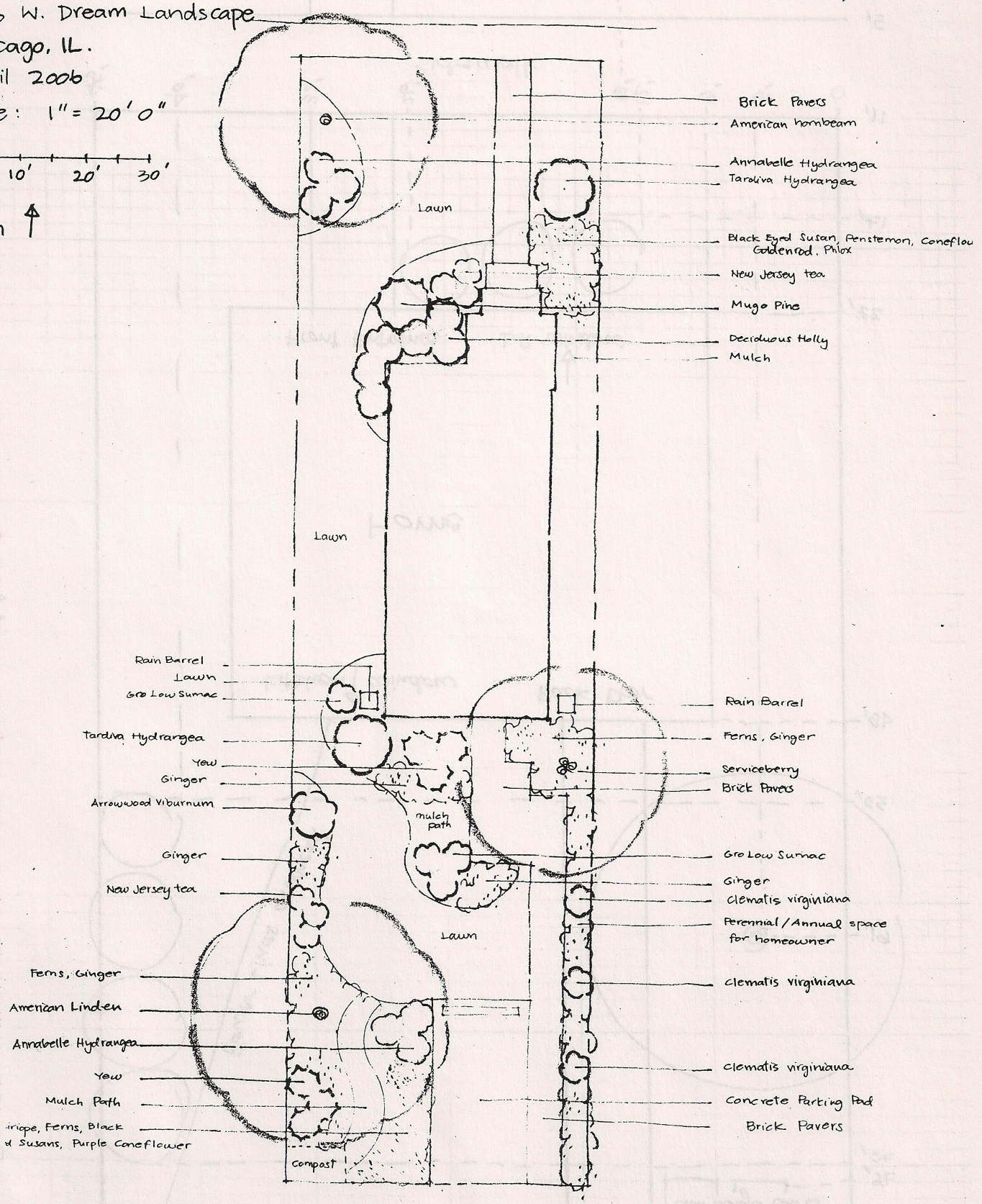
Label your drawing with:
Direction arrow pointing north
Scale
Date
Address

F. What should I measure?
Start with measuring the perimeter of your site: width and length.
Then start plotting and locating existing features

G. Measuring methods
Direct measuring – simple and direct measurement from the edge of one structure to another. Usually using one tape measure.
Baseline measuring – Based on the "up and over" method. Place one tape along a baseline, such as a sidewalk, to determine the "over" measurement. Use a second tape measure to find the distance "up" from the baseline.


ALLEY
Garbage Cans
Power Lines overhead
kitchen window
Back Door
Home
Front Entrance
L.R. window
sidewalk
maple
STREET
45'
40'
32'
26'
13'
12'
8'
5'
0
Basemap
Scale: 1" = 8' 0"
April 2006
Your home address
North

646 W. Dream Landscape
Chicago, IL.
April 2006
Scale: 1" = 20'0"

0' 10' 20' 30'

North