

What Type of Garden Do You Have?

Designer Gardens

Is your garden a certain style? Or is it eclectic, which in gardening terms means a little of this, a little of that? If you find it hard to resist a new plant, your garden is probably eclectic. Nothing wrong with that, as long as you try for some semblance of order; even the simple technique of planting at least three of one kind of plant and repeating the grouping more than once in a border or elsewhere in the yard will provide the appearance of a planned, organized design.

Before you dig, remember your garden should enhance your home. Consider the size of your property and the location of existing trees. Note what's growing well in your town and your neighborhood. Visit local nurseries, libraries, bookstores or garden websites to learn the requirements of the plants you like. No matter what garden design and plants you select, your garden should reflect your personal preferences.

If you want to plan traditional garden designs, follow these basic guidelines. For beginning gardeners, following others' leads at the outset often results in the most success and the best designs. Remember that a garden consists of more than plants; ornaments, rocks, fences, trellises, and paths contribute to the overall style of the design.

Cottage Garden

Whether you call it a country garden or an English cottage garden, this style says old-fashioned with its plants and layout. At first glance, it looks disorganized as it overflows with a mix of perennials, vines, even vegetables and herbs. Edging plants spill over onto straight stone or brick paths, softening the front of the border. Tall, background plants intertwine without support. Many of the perennials and hardy annuals seed themselves around the border. The disorder is an illusion. You need to train vining plants, at least in the beginning, up and over trellises and arbors. Plant three to five of each perennial you choose and repeat the planting three or more times. Keep the jungle-look under control by weeding out overly rambunctious seedlings. For this style, select plants with an eye to their foliage texture, shape and their growth habit as much as to the colors of the

blooms. Consider growing these plants for a cottage garden: beebalm, columbine, coneflower, daisy, delphiniums, dianthus, English daisy, foxglove, hardy geranium, hollyhock, iris, lamb's ears, larkspur, lavender, phlox, peony, Russian sage, clematis, climbing rose, morning glory, and trumpet vine.

Kitchen Garden

Traditionally a garden by the back door, handy for everyday use, a kitchen garden contains vegetables, herbs, and flowers for cutting. In colonial times, it would have held medicinal as well as culinary herbs, fruit trees and berryed shrubs. Nowadays, site it anywhere in the yard, front or back, that gets full sun for most of the day. Surround the garden with a wire or picket fence or a living evergreen hedge. Keep paths to a minimum by making wide rows, three to four feet wide; historically, rows were narrow, but space was not at a premium then. Construct raised beds, using lumber or brick, in rectangular or other shapes, if you want, and devote one vegetable to each; plant herbs along the edges. Make paths with packed soil, gravel, or brick. Group vegetables for their decorative qualities, as well as for ease of care.

Grow vining plants on tepees (great focal points) and on an arbor at the entrance to the garden. Plant the perimeter, inside and out, with flowers. Plants for a kitchen garden include: annual and perennial herbs, such as basil, cilantro, oregano, parsley, rosemary, and thyme; root, leafy, and vining vegetables; flowers for cutting, such as bachelor's buttons, marigolds, snapdragons, and zinnias, and flowers for eating such as calendulas, dianthus, pansies, marigolds, nasturtiums, and violas. A rainbow of unusual colored and ornamental vegetables can add interest to your garden and to your dinner table. Seed catalogs and seed racks in retail stores offer numerous new and exciting flowers and vegetables for your garden.

Natural Garden

Think of a tall-grass prairie or a field of flowers and grasses swaying in the breeze. Today's field may be a sunny side yard, an area in the backyard surrounded with a split rail fence, a double border on either side of the front walk, or the entire front yard. To start a natural garden, remove sod and weeds to give native plants and seeds an opportunity to grow without competition from plant intruders. Remember that not only herbaceous plants but also trees and shrubs belong in a natural, wild garden. Plants for a natural garden include perennial and annual wildflowers indigenous to

your area, ornamental grasses, and native trees and shrubs. In a 21st century suburb, neatness with such a design often counts for pleasing neighbors and local zoning codes. Mow broad grass paths through and around your "field" to give it the appearance of a standard garden. Accent it with accessories, such as birdhouses, a birdbath, and a bench at the end of one path as a destination. (Check with your county or state extension service.)

Oriental Garden

A sense of peace pervades an oriental-style garden, where careful placement of rocks and paths takes equal importance with plants. Function and ornamentation combine in stone benches, wooden bridges and fences.

Interest comes more from foliage texture and plant shapes (pruning is involved here) than from colorful flower displays. Water plays a major role, whether in a small pond, a cascading waterfall, or a simple trickle from a fountain made with bamboo. For gardeners with shady yards, oriental designs deliver beauty without the necessity of flowers from spring to frost.

The primary color in an oriental garden is green. Plants for an oriental garden include: agastache, *Asparagus densiflorus*, fall flowering chrysanthemum, flowering cabbage or kale, nicotiana lemon-lime flowers, Zinnia 'Envy' green flowers, basil, chives, dill, thyme, moss, ferns, and bamboo.

Rock Garden

To imitate nature, a rock garden should be on a hillside or at least an incline. To create one on a level surface, mound soil slightly and bury rocks from half to three-quarters deep to make them look as if they have forced their way above ground or been worn down by wind and water over centuries. Use rocks and stones that occur naturally in your area; set them in a freeform, informal pattern. Traditional plants for a rock garden consist of alpines and miniatures that survive on a minimum of soil and water in their natural habitat. In practice, you can use any delicate-looking plants, those that grow from tufts of foliage or spread slowly, plants with small stature, and even a few dwarf evergreens. Rocks and large stones are terrific accents in any garden, except a formal one, but placing a few among plants in your border does not make it a rock garden. Plants for a rock garden: armeria, baby-blue-eyes, perennial candytuft, evening primrose, lupine, maiden pinks, phlox, rockcress, sanvitalia, snow-in-summer, sweet alyssum, sweet william pinks, creeping thyme, viola, pansy, Iceland poppy, zinnia, and succulents such as sedums and sempervivum. For more

information, check out the web site of the North American Rock Garden Society at www.nargs.org.

The plant recommendations for each design are general references. Each gardener needs to conduct research into the best plants for his or her garden based on climate and soil type. Always select a plant that is adaptable to your location and check to insure it does not become invasive in your area. It is very difficult to make general plant recommendations for all zones in North America. The National Garden Bureau makes these recommendations with the strong advice that gardeners conduct additional research.

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