

Landscaping Ideas for the Do-It-Yourself Gardner

Landscaping your garden is not such a difficult task. Many people enjoy doing it themselves. You've just got to have the ideas and know the basic principles of landscape design.

Begin by taking a close look at the gardens and parks in your neighborhood, identifying the consistency, balance, simplicity, proportions, transitions, lines and contrasts in the landscaping designs and the use of plants, garden decor, landscaping fabric, etc.

Then sit down and make a landscaping plan for your own garden. Take measurements and prepare a sketch. Select a theme and decide the focal points. Provide for irrigation systems, sprinklers and vehicular access.

Decide on the materials, plants, decor, colors, textures and positioning. Keep an eye on the details and take a bold yet simple approach.

Have confidence in yourself and see yourself landscaping your garden as a do-it-yourself gardener. Sound fantastic? Yes, you can do landscaping all by yourself and create a splendid visual. Read on.

Landscaping begins with a basic understanding of the principles involved.

* Be simple. If you're doing it for the first time, don't make a complicated plan for landscaping. Select something simple, do it, find out how easy is it. Happy? Try something more complex next time.

* Create a theme. This helps you to be consistent. You place things that match each other in shape, size, color, texture and tone. Don't place a big red rock next to a small white one. If you are working on the theme "water", have a fountain or two and a couple of small ponds in the design. Repeat things. You get more unity in landscaping this way.

* Balance things in landscaping. It can either be symmetrical or asymmetrical. The former is the mirror image type. One part replicates the other part in layout, design, plant height, plant grouping, bed choice and color scheme. The latter creates diversity in landscaping design - some abstract form with widely different shapes and layouts.

* Be creative in color choice. Color adds life, so use it imaginatively to create maximum effects in landscaping. Place contrasts, bright against the subdued and get the real beauty. Achieve depth with dark colors. Draw things close with cool colors. Make the distance noticeable with bright colors.

* Move naturally. Don't jump abruptly-use the staircase effect. Tall, small, smaller, smallest-follow this order in landscaping when planting trees and shrubs.

* Follow lines. These appeal to the eyes most naturally. Use straight lines to create sharp impacts and curvy lines to bring in pleasing effects.

* Stick to proportions. This is basic in any design and landscaping is no exception. Don't strike a discordant note by placing a big artifact in a small garden. Or set up a small fountain in a big, splashing pond! All our objects and decor should match one another in proportion to create the most appealing landscape.

All landscaping designs have a focal point. Get good garden statues, natural objects and garden decor to be your focal points. Place tall plants in the middle or behind a group of small plants-the tall plants attract us naturally. Circles have a special appeal, so placing the focal point in the deepest part of an inside curve often gives very special effects to the landscaping.

Draw out your landscaping plan. Take measurements of your plot. Make a sketch using an appropriate scale, like 1 inch=10 feet. Prepare the layout of paths, beds, objects, sidewalks, decks and driveways. Get ideas and read books. Select the appropriate style-formal or informal, classic or contemporary. Finally, give shape to the master plan. You may try the "bubble graph" for a better representation. Select a good landscaping fabric. Avoid plastics and don't let gaps get between sections of fabric. Now, your landscaping plan is ready. Go ahead and implement it, become a do-it-yourself gardener.

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About the Author

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