



Designing for *Harmony*

By Renée Wright

Every successful garden will, upon closer examination, yield a hidden framework, a carefully considered design which facilitates harmony, balance and beauty with just enough excitement to suit the temperament of the individuals who use it.

The more successful the garden, the less obvious this forethought will be. It is only really when something is not quite right that one becomes aware of the lack of adherence to sound design principles.

A garden should assist us in finding inner balance, be restorative and healing in its effect, and yet provide lively interest and perhaps a little intrigue. This delicate balancing act also has to be entirely functional and suited to the lifestyle of its owners. This is the wonderful and unique challenge of a garden designer, to find the solution that is custom fit for each individual site with its own particular restrictions and challenges, the taste of the client and their own unique wish list for the lifestyle they wish to enjoy.

The smaller the garden, the more important a good design becomes. A larger garden can mask a multitude of errors.... in a small garden the difference between a good and bad design is immediately obvious.

A garden should not only be beautiful, but utterly functional and practical. The frustration of impracticality tends to quickly overcome the enjoyment of beauty!

Here are some key aspects to approaching the design of a garden, and particularly the smaller garden spaces that are becoming increasingly common.



KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:

- Keep it simple and stick to a style. For a particular theme to succeed, it needs to be carried right through.
- Be clear on what you want to do in the garden and what you want the garden elements to do for you. Be realistic – ask yourself: Will I really use this feature and who will look after it?
- A strong ground pattern is essential and will compensate for many planting errors. Design does not become easier with decreasing size however, rather it becomes more difficult, demanding and a great deal more important.
- Choosing appropriate plants is crucial in ensuring a small garden design works well. Always consider the full adult dimensions of plants.
- Resist the temptation to over plant. An over crowded small garden obliterates any sense of tranquility and restfulness otherwise possible. Make peace with the fact that you can't have every beautiful plant in your own garden.
- Be mindful of ergonomics – one needs to be able to move through the garden comfortably, and be able to execute maintenance with ease.
- There is always space for a water element, even in the smallest garden. The sight and sound of moving water is simply unparalleled in its ability to confer peace and tranquility.
- Do not overlook the finer subtleties of foliage color, texture and shape variation of plant material – this provides a rich tapestry of interest in the garden. Flowers are a bonus on top of all this!
- Make the garden your own – add those little touches that are meaningful to you, but avoid over embellishment.
- Create a design and stick to it – this is the only way to avoid a patchwork quilt of sudden inspirations and impulse purchases.

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