



Beyond plants

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BY RICHARD RIX

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Design is an extremely subjective thing, thankfully, or all gardens would tend to look the same. Nevertheless, there are a few basic rules that are worth heeding, so as to maximize the garden's eye appeal.

All good garden design starts with a plan, whether it is on paper or in your head. It can be detailed or general, fixed or flexible. There should be an overall scheme of things for the whole property,

even if you plan only on doing it piecemeal. That way, things will tend to get done in a coordinated fashion, and ideas that don't quite work in one area may readily be transferred to another.

Further, while some aspects may involve working with non-plant material, you should 'all along' take into account prime growing areas and shade cast by trees and buildings, if you are to get the most from your plants. People moving into a new home may in fact be excused for not doing much at all the first year, as they familiarize themselves with the play of light and existing pleasing features and effects.

CLOSET FACTORY



PROTECH CURBS

only within the borders of individual countries. But through the voyages of the early explorers and an increase in literacy and trade, an interest arose in classical structures and a new understanding of construction was gained, leading to design innovations. New woods, skills, techniques, domestic items and fashions were introduced. With this enlightenment came the naming of different styles.

Trying to describe exactly what each distinct style looks like would probably take several hundred pages. Some interior decorating styles or themes are popular. Here is a very brief description of the characteristic features of each.

1. There are “national” styles such as English, English Country, American Country, American South West, French, French Country, Italian, Caribbean and Oriental.

2. There are “period” styles, named for a particular era: Gothic – pointed arch and vault shapes, sculpted religious details; Renaissance – rediscovery of the classical and symmetrical details of ancient Rome and Greece; Restoration, Regence, Directoire – decorations are influenced by the discovery of ancient Pompeii, the division of walls into cornices; Federal, Empire – fluted pilasters, pediments, neoclassical columns, elliptical fanlights, and tracery.

3. Monarch styles such as Louis XIV, XV, XVI in France; and in Britain, the Stuarts – William and Mary, Queen Anne, Georgian and Victorian.

4. There are styles named for particular furniture designers, such as Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Adam Brothers and Sheraton.

There are also general terms of particular styles of furniture and decoration,

including: Baroque – elaborate and excessive wood carving and decoration, as in the spirally twisted columns in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome; Rococo – curves and shells; Neoclassic – simple Greek/Roman classical forms; Art Nouveau – abandonment of all historical references, extensive use of curved contours, and extravagant, twisted ornaments, based on forms drawn from nature; Art Deco – luxurious surface effects and exquisite ornamentation, streamlined, incorporating tropical woods, animal skins and archaeological discoveries from Egypt; William Morris/Arts & Crafts Movement – enthusiasm towards bringing nature into design, concentrating on fine hand-crafted furniture and accessories; Charles Rennie Mackintosh – abstract and geometric design; Bauhaus/Le Corbusier/Modernism – stark lines, uncluttered, glass-walled, limited use of colour, tubular steel furniture;



A Mediterranean theme is used in this kitchen. Above, simplicity and symmetry define this living room style.

Mini-malism – the art of living with the least, as in traditional Japanese interiors; Post-Modernism – the presence and influence of the past on contemporary spaces and elements of design; and High Tech – emphasis on advanced technologies and visible displays of elements of science, computer-oriented themes, aerospace and automated industrial items.

Note that pure decoration in a single period is fairly predictable. Most people, including professional designers, are more at ease with an exciting and varied,



A country theme can be easy to achieve.

eclectic look.

The eclectic (borrowing from many sources) style is a real art form. What is needed for success in this style is a balanced combination of form, scale and colour in order to mix period styles of furniture, paintings, sculptures, materials, objects and lighting to create a whole that is completely harmonious. 🍁

■ *Catherine Fantauzzi, a certified interior decorator and design consultant with First Impressions Decor of Maple, Ont., can be reached at 416-937-4152.*

Photos courtesy: Room Recipes, Benjamin Moore Paints

Hot tips for outdoor living

Here are a few ideas to help everyone enjoy summer fun in comfort and safety.

- Make sure to wear sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.
- Some prescription drugs can make you more sensitive to the sun, so check with your pharmacist to see if any of your medications could have that effect. One example is Tetracycline.
- If you do get a burn, apply topical analgesics to soothe the skin. Remember to keep skin moisturized to relieve dryness.
- Some old-fashioned remedies for sunburns include sponging the area with cold tea, rubbing on a paste of cornstarch and water, or applying a slice of raw potato. As well, don't forget the juice from the leaf of an aloe plant – the older the plant, the better.
- A couple of ASA tablets every four hours will also help reduce pain and inflammation from sunburn.
- Drink plenty of fluids while working out of doors. Water is the best drink to keep dehydration from becoming a problem. Remember, thirst means you have already started to dehydrate, so keep the liquids flowing even before your body craves them.
- Our summers seem to be getting hotter so it pays to be aware of the symptoms of heat exhaustion. They include dizziness, nausea, rapid breathing and pulse, and faintness. If you or anyone else shows these signs, lie down in a cool spot, loosen clothing and drink lots of cold water.
- Pets can suffer from heat exhaustion or heatstroke as well, so make sure that dogs and cats who like the out of doors are provided with plenty of shade and water on hot days.
- Don't forget that butterflies and birds need water too. A birdbath or small circulating fountain offers them a refreshing drink.
- Light-coloured clothing will discourage bees from coming your way.
- For bee or wasp stings, try applying some witch hazel to cool the sting. Ice will also work.
- A little toothpaste on an unscratched mosquito bite will help to cut down on the itching.
- If your skateboarding kids end up with skinned knees, cleanup is easier with warm or cool water rather than hot. Hot water makes blood coagulate so it's harder to remove.
- When it's time to remove the bandages from those skinned knees, a little rubbing alcohol or baby oil will help loosen the tape.
- Now that we've covered ways to keep the family safe and handle minor summer mishaps, what about some fun? We highly recommend that you turn on the sprinkler, put on your bathing suit and do like the kids – go for a refreshing, fun-filled run through the water. 🌿

HOGAN

Tips for replacing your windows

Windows are one of the areas of a home that can cause discomfort. If you feel drafts coming from old windows, replacements will solve the problem. Replacing existing windows with energy-efficient ones not only will reduce heating and air conditioning costs, but also add beauty and value to your home.

Most replacement windows are built using similar vinyl frame and window sash technology, and for the most part, these components are similar regarding their energy efficiency. The largest variance in energy efficiency is in the glass.

Replacement windows that have a low-emissivity coating 'or "Low E" rating' help to keep heat in the home during cold weather. Also, windows with double glass panes filled with argon gas act as an insulator. In fact, low E, argon-filled replacement windows provide 17 per cent more energy efficiency than regular replacement windows. ❁



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PHANTOM SCREENS



The element of mystery is important to garden design, for when you create mystery, you create interest. A path that disappears around a corner is a good example; it doesn't actually have to lead anywhere, just create the illusion of doing so. Surprise is another effective way to create interest and is usually achieved by allowing the visitor to come across something unexpectedly, such as a statue or unusual plant.

Predictability is the opposite of surprise and as such is to be avoided. A prime example is the blank wall or fence, and you should try to soften its impact with trees, shrubs or vines, or even by erecting a simple pergola. As well, you can often succeed in distracting the eye from ugly views by placing prominent items in the foreground.

Sometimes a paved area in a yard makes for an attractive design feature, such as beneath a maple tree where foot traffic is heavy and grass or other ground cover is hard to grow. Generally, smaller stones (or pavers) work best, and you can have fun laying them yourself, providing you prepare the subsurface properly with a few centimetres of tamped sand. When you have finished, you don't have to leave it as a barren area but can set planters there, filled to the brim with bright annuals.

SMALL GARDENS

If you have a small city garden, a useful way to avoid dullness is to add contour through a small hill or berm. It also helps if you raise the soil around the edges of the yard, rather than have it slope away, though you might first need to build a retaining wall, to make such contouring possible. Another technique in the small space is to draw attention to a single focal point, such as a large ornamental pot, a statue, or even a tree.

Rocks are a useful landscaping material. A single large one can serve as an effective focal point, or you can try clusters of them for that natural look. Moderate- to large-size rocks look very effective when grouped under conifers that have started to lose their lower foliage, such as aging pine and spruce. Many nurseries and garden centres now carry limestone rocks, though if you prefer richer-looking granite you may have to source it from a specialist, such as Allstone Quarry Products in Schomberg.

Rock placement is a physical challenge, for each piece can weigh several tons and will need to be positioned by specialized equipment. As well, rock generally looks better when partially concealed in the ground rather than lying right on top, so

Home Digest garden editor *Richard Rix* recently authored "*Make a Splash,*" a guide to creating and maintaining a beautiful pool and garden.



preparation is an important aspect of a successful layout.

WATER FEATURES

Water is an extremely versatile medium, and do-it-yourself kits now make it easy to install your own pond or waterfall. Stagnant water is not a good idea (for reasons of hygiene and insect control) but recirculating pumps are reasonably cheap to buy and run, and use the same water over and over. One of the advantages of a fountain, even a small one, is that the noise of running water can help mask the din of the city. Friendly chemicals now available at many chain stores keep pond water pure and prevent the buildup of toxins and algae.

If you have a swimming pool to landscape around, then your major challenge will be how to integrate it into its immediate surroundings and whether to adopt a naturalistic, formal or classical approach. Here's a shameless plug, but my book "*Make A Splash! – A Canadian Guide to Creating and Maintaining a Beautiful Pool and Garden*" (Macmillan, 2001) covers the subject in detail, as well as the mechanics of the pool and such topics as safety and poolside accessories.

LIGHTING

Artificial lighting (also covered in "*Make A Splash!*") is an area that is often ignored, yet can transform even a mediocre yard into a nighttime marvel. While its power is feeble compared with sunlight, artificial lighting allows you to take charge and illuminate those areas of the garden that you wish to highlight and to conceal those that you don't. It can also do wonderful things with regard to perspective and space, and we'll have more to say about it in a future issue.

Finally, bear in mind that a creatively built deck can be a useful design element as well as a functional one. It can conceal a problem area nicely and provide you with a zone of rest and relaxation from which to survey and appreciate all your gardening efforts – maybe while luxuriating in a built-in hot tub or spa. 🍁

■ *Richard Rix lives and gardens in Toronto and may be reached at richardrix@home.com.*

NOTE TO READERS: My Early Spring issue column recommended that Rhododendrons be avoided in most Toronto-area gardens. Predictably perhaps, my words drew warm agreement from some people and harsh criticism from several others. In the latter group was Art Drysdale – the "ultimate gardener," according to his website. Curiously, he suggests that I trashed Azaleas and Magnolias too, which is not the case. Just to reiterate, the Rhododendron is a splendid plant, but it requires more care than most people have time for and performs best in a climate quite different from our own. You can reread the article by visiting www.home-digest.com.