

# Garden design

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**Garden design** is the art and process of designing and creating plans for layout and planting of gardens and landscapes. Garden design may be done by the garden owner themselves, or by professionals of varying levels of experience and expertise. Most professional garden designers have some training in horticulture and the principles of design, and some are also landscape architects, a more formal level of training that usually requires an advanced degree and often a state license. Amateur gardeners may also attain a high level of experience from extensive hours working in their own gardens, through casual study, serious study in Master Gardener Programs, or by joining gardening clubs.



The White Garden at Sissinghurst Castle Garden, designed by Vita Sackville-West

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## Elements of garden design

Whether a garden is designed by a professional or an amateur, certain principles form the basis of effective garden design, resulting in the creation of gardens to meet the needs, goals and desires of the users or owners of the gardens.

Elements of garden design include the layout of hard landscape, such as paths, walls, water features, sitting areas and decking; as well as the plants themselves, with consideration for their horticultural requirements, their season-to-season appearance, lifespan, growth habit, size, speed of growth, and combinations with other plants and landscape features. Consideration is also given to the maintenance needs of the garden, including the time or funds available for regular maintenance, which can affect the choice of plants in terms of speed of growth, spreading or self-seeding of the plants, whether annual or perennial, and bloom-time, and many other characteristics.

Important considerations in garden design include how the garden will be used, the desired stylistic genre (formal or informal, modern or traditional etc.), and the way the garden space will connect to the home or other structures in the surrounding areas. All of these considerations are subject to the limitations of the prescribed budget.

## Location

A garden's location can have a substantial influence on its design. Topographical landscape features such as steep slopes, vistas, hills and outcrops etc. may suggest or determine aspects of design such as layout, and can be used and augmented in order to create a particular impression.<sup>[1]</sup> The soils of the site will affect what types of plant may be grown, as will the garden's climate zone and various microclimates. The locational context of the garden can also influence its design; for example an urban setting may require a different design style to a rural one. Similarly, a windy coastal location may necessitate a different treatment compared to a sheltered inland site.

## Soil

The quality of a garden's soil can have a significant influence on a garden's design and its subsequent success. Soil influences the availability of water and nutrients, the activity of soil micro-organisms, and temperature within the root zone, and thus may have a determining effect on the types of plants which will grow successfully in the garden. However soils may be replaced or improved in order to make them more suitable.

Traditionally, garden soil is improved by amendment, the process of adding beneficial materials to the native subsoil and particularly the topsoil. The added materials, which may consist of compost, peat, sand, mineral dust, or manure, among others, are mixed with the soil to the preferred depth. The amount and type of amendment may depend on many factors, including the amount of existing soil humus, the soil structure (clay, silt, sand, loam etc.), the soil acidity/alkalinity, and the choice of plants to be grown. One source states that, "conditioning the soil thoroughly before planting enables the plants to establish themselves quickly and so play their part in the design."<sup>[2]</sup> However, not all gardens are, or should be, amended in this manner, since many plants prefer an impoverished soil. In this case, poor soil is better than a rich soil that has been artificially enriched.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

## Boundaries

The design of a garden can be affected by the nature of its boundaries, both external and internal, and in turn the design can influence the boundaries, including via creation of new ones. Planting can be used to modify an existing boundary line by softening or widening it. Introducing internal boundaries can help divide or break up a garden into smaller areas.

The main types of boundary within a garden are hedges, walls and fences. A hedge may be evergreen or deciduous, formal or informal, short or tall, depending on the style of the garden and purpose of the boundary. A wall has a strong foundation beneath it at all points,<sup>[5]</sup> and is usually - but not always - built from brick, stone or concrete blocks. A fence differs from a wall in that it is anchored only at intervals, and is usually constructed using wood or metal (such as iron or wire mesh).

Boundaries may be constructed for several reasons: to keep out livestock or intruders, to provide privacy, to create shelter from strong winds and provide microclimates, to screen unattractive structures or views, and to create an element of surprise.

## Surfaces

In temperate western gardens, a smooth expanse of lawn is often considered essential to a garden. However garden designers may use other surfaces, for example those "made up of loose gravel, small pebbles, or wood chips" in order to create a different appearance and feel.<sup>[6]</sup> Designers may also utilise the contrast in texture and color between different surfaces in order to create an overall pattern in the design.

Surfaces for paths and access points are chosen for practical as well as aesthetic reasons. Issues such as safety, maintenance and durability may need to be considered by the designer. Gardens designed for public access need to cope with heavier foot traffic and hence may utilise surfaces - such as resin-bonded gravel - that are rarely used in private gardens.



Naturalistic planting design

## Planting design

Planting design requires design talent and aesthetic judgement combined with a good level of horticultural, ecological and cultural knowledge. It includes two major traditions: formal rectilinear planting design (Persia and Europe); and formal asymmetrical (Asia) and naturalistic planting design.

## History

Persian gardens are credited with originating aesthetic and diverse planting design. A correct Persian garden will be divided into four sectors with water being very important for both irrigation and aesthetics. The four sectors symbolize the Zoroastrian elements of sky, earth, water and plants.<sup>[7]</sup> Planting in ancient and Medieval European gardens was often a mix of herbs for medicinal use, vegetables for consumption, and flowers for decoration. Purely aesthetic planting layouts developed after the Medieval period in Renaissance gardens, as are shown in late-renaissance paintings and plans. The designs of the Italian Renaissance garden were geometrical and plants were used to form spaces and patterns. The gardens of the French Renaissance and Baroque Garden à la française era continued the 'formal garden' planting aesthetic.

In Asia the asymmetrical traditions of planting design in Chinese gardens and Japanese gardens originated in the Jin Dynasty (265–420) of China. The gardens' plantings have a controlled but naturalistic aesthetic. In Europe the arrangement of plants in informal groups developed as part of the English Landscape Garden style, and subsequently the French landscape garden, and was strongly influenced by the picturesque art movement.

## Application

A planting plan gives specific instructions, often for a contractor about how the soil is to be prepared, what species are to be planted, what size and spacing is to be used and what maintenance operations are to be carried out under the contract. Owners of private gardens may also use planting plans, not for contractual purposes, as an aid to thinking about a design and as a record of what has been planted. A planting strategy is a long term strategy for the design, establishment and management of different types of vegetation in a landscape or garden.

Planting can be established by directly employed gardeners and horticulturalists or it can be established by a landscape contractor (also known as a landscape gardener).

Landscape contractors work to drawings and specifications prepared by garden designers or landscape architects.



Garden chairs and table

## Garden furniture

Garden furniture may range from a *patio set* consisting of a table, four or six chairs and a parasol, through benches, swings, various lighting, to stunning artifacts in brutal concrete or weathered oak.<sup>[8]</sup> Patio heaters, that run on bottled butane or propane, are often used to enable people to sit outside at night or in cold weather. A picnic table, is used for the purpose of eating a meal outdoors such as in a garden.

The materials used to manufacture modern patio furniture include stones, metals, vinyl, plastics, resins, glass, and treated woods.

## Sunlight

While sunlight is not always easily control by the gardener, it is an important element of garden design. The amount of available light is a critical factor in determining what plants may be grown. Sunlight will, therefore, have a substantial influence on the character of the garden. For example, a rose garden is generally not successful in full shade, while a garden of hostas may not thrive in hot sun. As another example, a vegetable garden may need to be placed in a sunny location, and if that location is not ideal for the overall garden design goals, the designer may need to change other aspects of the garden.

In some cases, the amount of available sunlight can be influenced by the gardener. The location of trees, other shade plants, garden structures, or, when designing an entire property, even buildings, might be selected or changed based on their influence in increasing or reducing the amount of sunlight provided to various areas of the property.

In other cases, the amount of sunlight is not under the gardener's control. Nearby buildings, plants on other properties, or simply the climate of the local area, may limit the available sunlight. Or, substantial changes in the light conditions of the garden may not be within the gardener's means. In this case, it is important to plan a garden that is compatible with the existing light conditions.

## Lighting

Garden lighting can be an important aspect of garden design. In most cases, various types of lighting techniques may be classified and defined by heights: safety lighting, uplighting, and downlighting. Safety lighting is the most practical application. However, it is more important to determine the type of lamps and fittings needed to create the desired effects. Light regulates three major plant processes: photosynthesis, phototropism, and photoperiodism.

Photosynthesis provides the energy required to produce the energy source of plants.

Phototropism is the effect of light on plant growth that causes the plant to grow toward or away from the light.<sup>[9]</sup> Photoperiodism is a plant's response or capacity to respond to photoperiod, a recurring cycle of light and dark periods of constant length.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Types of gardens

### Islamic gardens

Garden design, and the Islamic garden tradition, began with creating the Paradise garden in Ancient Persia, in Western Asia. It evolved over the centuries, and in the different cultures Islamic dynasties came to rule in Central— South Asia, the Near East, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula.

### Examples

Some styles and examples include:

- Persian gardens

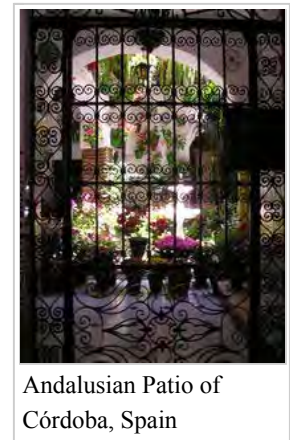


- Eram Garden
- Fin Garden
- Mughal gardens
  - Nishat Bagh
  - Shalimar Gardens (Lahore)
  - Yadavindra Gardens (Pinjore)
- Charbagh
  - Taj Mahal
  - Tomb of Humayun gardens
- Bagh (garden)
  - Bagh-e Babur
  - Shalimar Bagh (Srinagar)
- Al-Andalus—Moorish architecture and gardens
  - Alcázar of Seville
  - Alhambra
  - Generalife

## Mediterranean gardens

Garden design history and precedents from the Mediterranean region include:

- Ancient Greek and Hellenistic gardens
- Ancient Roman gardens
  - Peristyle gardens —*evolved into Cloister gardens.*
  - House of the Vettii — *Pompeii.*
  - Horti Sallustiani
- Byzantine gardens
- Spanish gardens
  - Andalusian Patio



Andalusian Patio of Córdoba, Spain

## Renaissance and Formal gardens

*Main article:* Renaissance gardens

A formal garden in the Persian garden and European garden design traditions is rectilinear and axial in design. The equally formal garden, without axial symmetry (asymmetrical) or other geometries, is the garden design tradition of Chinese gardens and Japanese gardens. The Zen garden of rocks, moss and raked gravel is an example. The Western model is an ordered garden laid out in carefully planned geometric and often symmetrical lines. Lawns and hedges in a formal garden need to be kept neatly clipped for maximum effect. Trees, shrubs, subshrubs and other foliage are carefully arranged, shaped and continually maintained. A French garden or Garden à la française, is a specific kind of formal garden, laid out in the manner of André Le Nôtre; it is centered on the façade of a building, with radiating avenues and paths of gravel, lawns, parterres and pools (*bassins*) of reflective water enclosed in geometric shapes by stone coping, with fountains and sculpture.

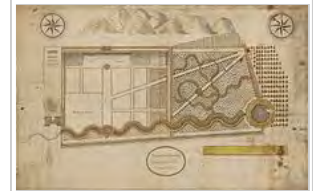


French formal garden and parterre at Château de Villandry in the Loire Valley

The Garden à la française style has origins in fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance gardens, such as the Villa d'Este, Boboli Gardens, and Villa Lante in Italy. The style was brought to France and expressed in the gardens of the French Renaissance. Some of the earliest formal parterres of clipped evergreens were those laid out at Anet by Claude Mollet, the founder of a dynasty of nurserymen-designers that lasted deep into the 18th century. The Gardens of Versailles are an ultimate example of Garden à la française, composed of many different distinct gardens, and designed by André Le Nôtre.



Jardin de Saxe (Plan of the Saxon Garden)



A plan of a formal garden for a country estate in Wales, 1765

English Renaissance gardens in a rectilinear formal design were a feature of the stately homes. The introduction of the parterre was at Wilton House in the 1630s. In the early eighteenth century, the publication of Dezallier d'Argenville, *La théorie et la pratique du jardinage* (1709) was translated into English and German, and was the central document for the later formal gardens of Continental Europe.

Traditional formal Spanish garden design evolved with Persian garden and European Renaissance garden influences. The internationally renowned Alhambra and Generalife in Granada, built in the Moorish Al-Andalus era, have influenced design for centuries. The Ibero-American Exposition of 1929 World's Fair in Seville, Spain was located in the celebrated Maria Luisa Park (*Parque de Maria Luisa*) designed by Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier.<sup>[11]</sup>

Formal gardening in the Italian and French manners was reintroduced at the turn of the twentieth century. Beatrix Farrand's formal Italian garden areas at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., and Achille Duchêne's restored French water parterre at Blenheim Palace in England are examples of the modern formal garden. The Conservatory Garden in Central Park of New York City features a formal garden, as do many other parks and estates such as Filoli in California.

The simplest formal garden would be a box-trimmed hedge lining or enclosing a carefully laid out flowerbed or garden bed of simple geometric shape, such as a knot garden. The more developed and elaborate formal gardens contain statuary and fountains.

Features in a formal garden may include:

- Terrace
- Topiary
- Statuary
- Hedge
- Bosquet
- Parterre
- Sylvan theater
- Pergola
- Pavilion
- Landscaping



Formal garden laid out at the Abbaye de Valloires, Picardy, by Gilles Clément, 1987

## English Landscape and Naturalistic gardens

The English Landscape Garden style practically swept away the geometries of earlier English and European Renaissance formal gardens. William Kent and Lancelot "Capability" Brown were leading proponents, among many other designers. The naturalistic English Garden style (French: *Jardin anglais*, Italian: *Giardino all'inglese*, German: *Englischer Landschaftsgarten*) of the 1730s and on transformed private and civic garden design across Europe. The French Landscape Garden subsequently continued the style's development on the Continent.

## Cottage gardens

A cottage garden uses an informal design, traditional materials, dense plantings, and a mixture of ornamental and edible plants. Cottage gardens go back many centuries, but their popularity grew in 1870s England in response to the more structured Victorian English estate gardens that used restrained designs with massed beds of brilliantly colored greenhouse annuals. They are more casual by design, depending on grace and charm rather than grandeur and formal structure.<sup>[12]</sup> The influential British garden authors and designers, William Robinson at Gravetye Manor in Sussex, and Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood in Surrey, both wrote and gardened in England. Jekyll's series of thematic gardening books emphasized the importance and value of natural plantings were an influence in Europe and the United States. Also influential half a century later was Margery Fish, whose surviving garden at East Lambrook Manor emphasizes, among other things, native plant life and the natural patterns produced by self-spreading and self-seeding.

The earliest cottage gardens were far more practical than modern versions—with an emphasis on vegetables and herbs, along with fruit trees, beehives, and even livestock if land allowed. Flowers were used to fill any spaces in between.

Over time, flowers became more dominant.<sup>[13]</sup> Modern day cottage gardens include countless regional and personal variations of the more traditional English cottage garden.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Kitchen garden or potager

The traditional kitchen garden, also known as a potager, is a seasonally used space separate from the rest of the residential garden - the ornamental plants and lawn areas. Most vegetable gardens are still miniature versions of old family farm plots with square or rectangular beds, but the kitchen garden is different not only in its history, but also its design.

The kitchen garden may be a landscape feature that can be the central feature of an ornamental, all-season landscape, but can be little more than a humble vegetable plot. It is a source of herbs, vegetables, fruits, and flowers, but it is also a structured garden space, a design based on repetitive geometric patterns.

The kitchen garden has year-round visual appeal and can incorporate permanent perennials or woody plantings around (or among) the annual plants.

## Shakespeare garden

A Shakespeare garden is a themed garden that cultivates plants mentioned in the works of William Shakespeare. In English-speaking countries, particularly the United States, these are often public gardens associated with parks, universities, and Shakespeare festivals. Shakespeare gardens are sites of cultural, educational, and romantic interest and can be locations for outdoor weddings.

Signs near the plants usually provide relevant quotations. A Shakespeare garden usually includes several dozen species, either in herbaceous profusion or in a geometric layout with boxwood dividers. Typical amenities are walkways and benches and a weather-resistant bust of Shakespeare. Shakespeare gardens may accompany reproductions of Elizabethan architecture. Some Shakespeare gardens also grow species typical of the Elizabethan period but not mentioned in Shakespeare's plays or poetry.

## Rock garden

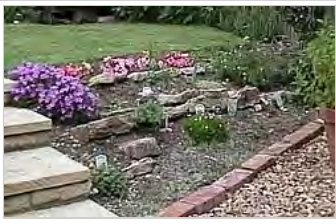
A rock garden, also known as a rockery or an alpine garden, is a type of garden that features extensive use of rocks or stones, along with plants native to rocky or alpine environments.



Formal potager at Villandry, France



An illustration from Walter Crane's 1906 book, *Flowers from Shakespeare's Garden: a Posy from the Plays*



A naturalistic rockery in England

Rock garden plants tend to be small, both because many of the species are naturally small, and so as not to cover up the rocks. They may be grown in troughs (containers), or in the ground. The plants will usually be types that prefer well-drained soil and less water.

The usual form of a rock garden is a pile of rocks, large and small, aesthetically arranged, and with small gaps between, where the plants will be rooted. Some rock gardens incorporate bonsai.



Rock garden in Chandigarh, India

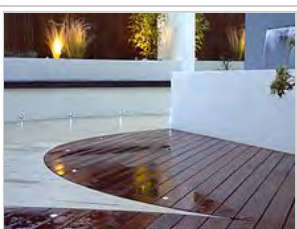
Some rock gardens are designed and built to look like natural outcrops of bedrock. Stones are aligned to suggest a bedding plane and plants are often used to conceal the joints between the stones. This type of rock garden was popular in Victorian times, often designed and built by professional landscape architects. The same approach is sometimes used in modern campus or commercial landscaping, but can also be applied in smaller private gardens.

The Japanese rock garden, in the west often referred to as *Zen garden*, is a special kind of rock garden which contains few plants. Rock gardens have become increasingly popular as landscape features in tropical countries such as Thailand.<sup>[15]</sup> The combination of wet weather and heavy shade trees, along with the use of heavy plastic liners to stop unwanted plant growth,<sup>[16]</sup> has made this type of arrangement ideal for both residential and commercial gardens due to its easier maintenance and drainage.<sup>[17]</sup>

## East Asian gardens

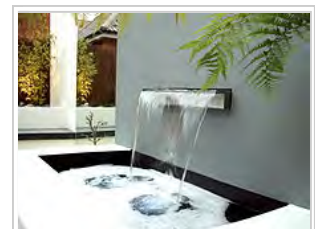
Japanese and Korean gardens, originally influenced by Chinese gardens, can be found at Buddhist temples and historic sites, private homes, in neighborhood or city parks, and at historical landmarks such as Buddhist temples. Some of the Japanese gardens most famous in the Western world and Japan are gardens in the *karesansui* (rock garden) tradition. The Ryōan-ji temple garden is a well-known example. There are Japanese gardens of various styles, with plantings and often evoking *wabi sabi* simplicity. In Japanese culture, garden-making is a high art, intimately linked to the arts of calligraphy and ink painting.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Contemporary garden



Contemporary garden

The contemporary style garden has gained popularity in the UK in the last 10 years. This is partly due to the increase of modern housing with small gardens as well as the cultural shift towards contemporary design. This style of garden can be defined by the use 'clean' design lines, with focus on hard landscaping materials like stone, hardwood, rendered walls. Planting style is bold but simple with the use of drifts of one or two plants that repeat throughout the design. Grasses are a very popular choice for this style of design. Lighting effects also play



Contemporary water feature

an integral role in the modern garden. Subtle lighting effects can be achieved with the use of carefully placed low voltage LED lights incorporated into paving and walls.

## Residential gardens

A residential or private domestic garden, is the most common form of garden and is in proximity to a residence, such as the 'front garden' or 'back garden'. The front garden may be a formal and semi-public space and so subject to the constraints of convention and local laws. While typically found in the yard of the residence, a garden may also be



established on a roof, in an atrium or courtyard, on a balcony, in windowboxes, or on a patio. Residential gardens are typically designed at human scale, as they are most often intended for private use. However, the garden of a great house or a large estate may be larger than a public park.

Residential gardens may feature specialized gardens, such as those for exhibiting one particular type of plant, or special features, such as rockery or water features. They are also used for growing herbs and vegetables and are thus an important element of sustainability.

## See also

- American Horticultural Society
- Aquascaping
- Back garden
- Celebrity gardener
- Computer-aided garden design
- Flower garden
- Garden
- Garden designer
- Garden buildings
- Garden furniture
- Garden sculpture
- Gardener
- Gardening
- Gardens by country
- History of gardens
- Index of gardening articles
- Landscape design history
- Landscape architecture
- List of gardening topics
- Roof garden
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Types of garden
- Water garden

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