

The Collector's Garden: Harmony from diversity

It's not the plants but your handling of them that makes them special.

I. Taking advice from collection curators

- A. Look for others who share your challenge: curators, collectors
- B. Items in all these collections unique but with some commonality
- C. Look at several strategies for effective display of collections, adapted to gardens

II. A permanent framework and changing displays

- A. Establish strong bones in the garden
 - 1. Static features -- plant or structural -- as nucleus, outline, and path
 - 2. Permanent and semi-permanent items as major furnishings
 - 3. Using collectibles to clothe the bones
- B. The notion of garden "rooms" becomes real -- visual and functional separations
 - 1. More opportunities for centerpieces, major furniture, entrances and exits
 - 2. Microclimates increase
 - 3. Redecorating becomes easier in a room-by-room approach

III. Themed displays

- Natural or contrived connections between collectibles shown together
- 1. Explanations sometimes necessary - opportunities for nifty signs
 - 2. Infinite possibilities

IV. Temporal separations

- A. Take plants "off display" after a few years
- B. A tough order to follow, but with advantages
 - 1. We learn the duration of a plant's "youth" and mature good looks
 - 2. Aim for timely retirement -- no call to watch the decline
 - 3. Less disease/pest problems from pathogen build-up (remember to rotate)
 - 4. Much larger list of total plants grown is possible
 - 5. No more money spent, but higher survival rate through less divided attention
 - 6. Reduced work re-designing areas -- more of a piece-out, piece-in movement
- C. Great call for garden collector clubs
 - 1. Annual exchange of items coming off display -- divide and rejuvenate
 - 2. Shared vow that ALL of that plant has been retired, so it remains unique

V. When the system breaks down, enjoy yourself anyway!

Useful references

- Dillon, Helen, *Garden Artistry: Secrets of Designing and Planting of a Small Garden*, MacMillan, 1995
Druse, Ken, *The Collector's Garden*, Potter, 1996
Harper, Pamela, *Color Echoes*, MacMillan, 1994
Harper, Pamela, *Designing With Perennials*, MacMillan, 1991
Hudak, Joseph, *Gardening With Perennials, Month by Month*, Timber Press, 1993
Isaacson, Richard T., *The Andersen Horticultural Library's Source List of Plants and Seeds*, Andersen Horticultural Library, Chanhassen, Minnesota (1993)
Lloyd, Christopher, *Christopher Lloyd's Flower Garden*, Dorling-Kindersley, 1993
Macunovich, Janet, *Easy Garden Design*, Storey Communications, Pownal, VT (1990)

Best Foot Forward: Designing Entry Gardens

A. "Front" gardens, defined

Where is it and why does it qualify as an entry?

What makes this area so important to you?

B. Messages (we send) via our front door garden and how

1. What an entry can say
2. What your entry might say, right now
3. What do you want it to say?

C. What elements can we manipulate, to what effect?

Start with general elements before specifics; e.g. "size" vs. plant name

1. Style: To complement home and landscape. Match the home/landscape
2. Size: Don't be limited. Use the whole "screen" seen by the viewer. Noticeable, manageable
3. Location: Is a dominant destination evident? Is it what you want?
4. Mood: How much control is apparent and what feel colors provide. Level of formality plays a great part.
5. Focus: Where is the eye drawn, to what point, along what path? Always subjective, we can put it where you *want* it to be

D. Designing

1. Get your priorities straight.
 - Answers to questions in A and B play a big part.
 - Pin down a budget -- not just dollars but time to maturity.
 - Be realistic -- avoid taxing caretaker with layout or plant choices.
2. Observe the area from a chosen viewpoint.
 - What's attractive? Which lines, shapes, textures, features.
 - Is attraction near or centered on the entry?
 - How can we link, frame, or center the entry?
 - Move in closer -- what's the site like, for growing?
3. Make a plant and feature list
 - What shapes, textures, colors do you want to see there?
 - Be practical -- what you can afford, and what will grow?
4. Choose the focal points -- where attention should rest.
 - A scale drawing can help
 - Three points work well -- triangles are simple and effective.
 - The door is often but not always a focal point.
 - Pattern of focal points contributes to the mood.
5. Place a primary focal point plant or feature.
 - A long-interest plant, year-round feature or a combo.
 - Small plant or feature? Multiply it to be noticeable to chosen viewer.
6. Frame the focal point.

- Choose framing plants for contrast.
 - Always more frame than focal point.
 - Pattern or line created by frame contributes to mood.
 - Frame may be of matched or unlike objects.
 - Multiple frames (matte and frame) can work, but don't overdo.
7. Place plants/features and frame the secondary focal points.
- Be increasingly selective -- fill existing interest gaps.
 - Outermost frames can link focal points, tie an area into a landscape.
8. Outline the area.
- Don't rush to fill every space -- space is a frame.
9. Adjust before planting, change it while it's simple -- still on paper!
- Correct seasonal appeal, balance, accessibility
 - Look from other vantage points

E. Integrate the entry with the rest of the landscape

1. Join:
- Repeat attractive elements from the overall picture.
 - Use a focal point pattern that fits the larger scene.
 - Use frames and filler to "cross the line" between new and old.
 - May be necessary to remove and redo some of the old...
2. Or divide:
- Make the entry a separate room -- calls for "door(s)" and "walls."
 - Only the "welcome mat" matches the old.

F. Overcoming obstacles

1. Growing conditions near entries can be terrible. Don't kid yourself!
- Improve the soil
 - Monitor the moisture
 - Be realistic about the light, improve it if you can
 - Intercede to reduce competition and exposure until plants establish.
2. For hidden entries, throw out a lure.
- Predict the path, align the focal points, and lead the way.

G. References

- Designing Your Gardens and Landscape, Janet Macunovich, Storey Communication, 1990
- The Exuberant Garden and the Controlling Hand, William H. Frederick Jr., Little, Brown and Co. 1992 (chapter "Entrance Gardens")
- Garden Design: History, Principles, Elements, Practices, W.L. Douglas, S.R. Frey, N.K. Johnson, S.L. Littlefield, M. Van Valkenburgh, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1984 (chapters "Landings" and "Entries")