



Eco-Friendly Choices for the Well-Designed Garden

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Introduction

1. Let's start at this beginning. . . How do people make choices about where to live? Why do people choose to own property around their homes? What is it that makes some of these pieces of property a landscape garden?
2. What constitutes a well-designed garden? What may have constituted a nice garden 100 years ago, 200 years ago, and 300 years ago? What is there a relationship between culture, economics, geography and garden styles?
3. Envision your ideal outdoor space or happiest outdoor memory. How did that space feel?
4. How does your home and garden, your "*ecos*," relate to the rest of the ecosystem of which we are a part? What are the pieces that make up an ecosystem?
5. The goal of Eco-Friendly Choices philosophy is to combine our ideas about appealing landscape designs with ecologically informed methods and materials.

Keys to higher aesthetics for landscapes in Western cultures

1. Unity between house and garden
2. Consistent sense of style, ground patterns and hardscape materials support the design theme
3. Appropriate scale and proportion, comfortable sequence of heights and forms
4. Balance of focal points to backdrop, interesting but not chaotic
5. Effectiveness in all seasons

Keys to being more eco-friendly

1. Proper management of soil biology as well as chemistry
2. Water conservation, rainfall storage, and efficient use of irrigation
3. Maintenance or increase of plant diversity; incorporation of selected native plants which can support the most native organisms
4. Reduction of toxic pesticides, thinking 7 generations ahead.

Start with a baseline inventory or audit

1. Soil assessment
2. Measure surface water run-off from roofs and paved areas- how much goes into the storm sewers?
3. Inventory and tally plants; determine the level of diversity. Note percentage of native trees, especially oaks.
4. Determine the structural make-up of your plantings, look for layers
5. Looking at 1-4 will tell you whether the site is supporting native insects, birds and microorganisms
6. Determine usage of gas-powered vehicles; evaluate carbon footprint of the landscape

Remember these eco-friendly design tips:

1. Know the design characteristics of all of your materials; forms, textures, colors, seasonal changes. . . and put them to good use.
2. Recognize the role of formality and informality; limit desire for control and perfection, consider use of formality in fewer locations or just near the house
3. Ground patterns and hardscapes become more significant in a looser look; they set the tone. Use them judiciously.
4. Provide destinations, comfortable circulation routes and seating.
5. Pay attention to sequences of height and texture; avoid height near paths and seating destinations, provide layers of plantings, with foreground, midground and background.
6. Pay attention to relative scale; use woody plants and structures to establish a size relationship to the house and to people.
7. Use some form of repetition to help tie things together

Good horticultural practices should guide maintenance decisions

1. A looser look requires less trimming and edging, but doesn't need to look unkempt..... hand prune woodies to natural shape every 3 years, avoid shearing or use shearing selectively to make a statement
2. Use proper plant siting and combine with natural associates when possible; plant in zones by watering needs
3. Use mowing "height zones" to transition from higher to lower maintenance; be sure to give edges of mowed areas a strong form
4. Create convenient spaces for compost, brush, leaf piles, etc.
5. Add the "right kind" of organic matter every year, not just bark mulch or mushroom compost; check pH.
6. Measure your irrigation devices; watering at the right time is critical
7. Aerate heavy use areas more frequently

Materials selections

1. Right plant right place; let natives fit the bill when they can; avoid invasives
2. Potential for use of local materials (stone, gravel, dried ash wood, brick, etc.)
3. Hardscape materials set the tone for a style or theme.
4. Much porous paving material on the market; slightly more expensive
5. Consider character of infrastructure; downspouts, rainfall harvest and storage systems, irrigation, management of grade changes,