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In BLOOM

By Karen Dardick and Photography by James Moll/GreenTree Landscaping

LIKE A TECH-SAVVY HOME THEATER OR AH-SPA MASTER
BATH, A GARDEN IS SIMPLY ANOTHER LIVING SPACE—
WHOSE BEAUTY IS ENJOYED UNDER AN OPEN SKY.

IN ADDITION TO being a distinctive haven where flowers grow, a well-done garden enhances the appearance of the home it surrounds and complements the lives of those who live there. Hence the common pairing of the terms “home” and “garden.”

New or old, sparse or overflowing, a glorious landscape typically implements the classic elements of landscape architecture: long vistas and parterres; manicured trees and shrubs creating borders and screens; and rectangular paths leading to bubbling fountains or perhaps a secret garden.

Beyond visual enhancement, a garden often tends to other senses too, namely taste and smell. Patches of flowers and herbs tender sweet scents, meanwhile vegetable gardens and orchards cultivate fresh produce for nourishing meals.

But regardless of the senses it serves, the garden remains an extension of the home and must-have residential accessory to boot.

The Patina of Age

One of the keys to creating a great estate garden—whether on one acre or many—is imparting a feeling of age to the property. Even if an estate is newly constructed, designing the surrounding landscape in a timeless way helps make it visually successful. This enduring style is what Landscape Architect Jonathan Plant achieves in the remarkable gardens he brings to life in California’s Napa Valley, where residences often serve as second homes or country estates in the midst of grapevines.

“A garden SHOULD IMPROVE ONE’S LIFESTYLE AND ENTICE A PERSON TO ENTER AND EXPERIENCE IT,” SAYS LANDSCAPE DESIGNER MICHAEL BAER.

“A good landscape should be conceived as a whole—in harmony with the residence,” Plant says. “There should be a natural flow that includes the beauty of the site and the buildings. The character of an estate garden should include its setting, which becomes part of the entire scene—what’s termed ‘the borrowed landscape.’”

Sprawling estates need plants in a large scale, so instead of relying on young trees or shrubs, Plant incorporates mature shrubs and specimen trees that are at least 25 feet tall. Large landscapes also require large-scale plantings. Rather than placing hundreds of daffodils into a flower bed, he may plant thousands of them on a hillside.

Planting for Privacy

Gnarled olive trees, a forest of white-trunk birch trees and a dense *Eugenia* hedge provide instant privacy and the patina of age to a young landscape in Beverly Hills. The one-acre residence, built in the 1930’s and home to actress Bette Davis in the 1950’s, was purchased by Mark and Julie Jackson Ukra in 1987. The couple wanted to retain the estate’s character and charm, yet achieve a level of privacy and serenity. Landscape designer Michael Baer, owner of GreenTree Landscaping, accepted the challenge. He fashioned an urban garden that serves as a beautiful sanctuary with utility and ambiance.

“A garden should improve one’s lifestyle and entice a person to enter and experience it,” says Baer. “In urban areas like Beverly Hills, privacy is a key design element. It’s

important to camouflage neighbors’ roofs, nearby telephone poles and mask street noises.”

Baer accomplishes these things by using mature flora like 125-year-old olive trees with knobby and sculptured bark. A single tree may cost \$10,000, but it delivers privacy on the spot. The designer also installs walls around properties and covers them with espalier fruit trees, rose plants or intricately patterned ivy vines.

Baer isn’t afraid of mixing styles. He combines classic European features like terraces, straight pathways and geometric design with an Asian influence by using Eastern statuary (like a Buddha fountain spilling water into the backyard swimming pool) and tropical plantings such as bamboo.

“Bamboo is fast-growing and provides privacy and scale, especially in keeping with large pieces of property,” he explains. “Yet we also include classic plants like birch trees, hedges, roses and citrus trees.”

Trendy Garden Accessories

Estate gardens can contain masses of plants. Or not. Some owners are passionate plant collectors who show off their rare acquisitions in the tradition of 19th and 20th century gardens, whose owners, like Henry Huntington, often delighted in acquiring rare plants found by globetrotting botanists. (Huntington’s vast acreage in San Marino, Calif., is now a public garden.) But many 21st century homeowners prefer art and accessories to plants, aiming for equally stunning but lower-maintenance landscapes.

5 HINTS FOR A FABULOUS GARDEN



1 THINK IN TERMS OF ROOMS.

Use walls, hedges and vine-dressed archways to segment the landscape into a series of garden vignettes.

2 DON'T SKIMP ON PLANTS.

Multiple make dramatic statements, whether in flowerbeds, on hillsides or in planters. Layer landscapes with trees and use tall shrubs as the anchors, then step down the sizes for a three- or even four-tier effect.

3 **ADD ACCENTS.** Instead of sporadic pots placed in ones or twos, group at least three or five together. Place items on patios or decks, or hang large baskets from overhangs along walls.

4 **LET WATER MAKE YOUR GARDEN SING.** Fountains—in a courtyard, at the end of a path or dressing a wall—make a good garden even better. For sloping property, add water rills (a series of

steps with running water) or runnels (small water channels). Or add a water garden with water lilies and irises.

5 **INCORPORATE SHADE.** Gazebos, pergolas and vine-laden arbors are visual statements that make the outdoors enjoyable, even in hot weather. Depending on location, cover structures with grapevines, roses or fragrant jasmine vines for a sweet scent.





"A GOOD LANDSCAPE SHOULD BE CONCEIVED AS A WHOLE—IN HARMONY WITH THE RESIDENCE," SAYS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT JONATHAN PLANT.



"We've seen a trend in the last five or 10 years towards more pottery, fountains, art and objects in landscapes," says Lew Whitney, director of Colorscape, the landscape design division of Roger's Gardens in Corona del Mar, Calif. "The difficult part for the designer can be finding these items."

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, it wasn't uncommon for American homeowners and designers to bring in antique statues, urns and fountains from Europe. William Randolph Hearst, for example, imported boatloads of garden-enhancing objects from the Old World to outfit his 250,000-acre estate in San Simeon, Calif. Today, European antiques aren't as easy or inexpensive to obtain, but fortunately companies like Carved Stone International and Smith & Hawken do the importing for the homeowner.

Smith & Hawken, a 25-year-old company specializing in fine outdoor furnishings and accessories, offers a wide range of urns, pottery, benches and garden art. Some are contemporary, like Premium Teak benches and brass planters, and others are modern renditions of longstanding designs.

When shopping for garden goods, it's always advisable to consider both the style and scale of the home and garden. "It's important to make big statements in estate gardens," says company spokesperson Katherine Whiteside. "Instead of one set of teak benches, add an outdoor dining set, too. Rather than spotting a few urns, place a border of urns along a path that leads to a classic fountain."

If you're shooting for a more classical style, look to Carved Stone International in Carlsbad, Calif. The company sells garden pieces that exhibit timelessness from long ago. Product offerings include marble or limestone benches and

fountains, as well as handcrafted marble benches made by artisans in India.

A Flourishing Investment

Gardens don't just grow flowers and food; they can also grow the perceived and actual value of your estate. "Landscaping always makes a huge difference," says Barry Sloane, director of historically and architecturally significant properties for Sotheby's International Realty, Beverly Hills. "You can expect to double your investment, but up to a point. If it means very high water bills or the services of a full-time gardener, it may not appeal to everyone and limit buyers if they think the estate landscaping is more like that of a resort." ✨

TO LEARN MORE

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