

## GARDENS Four Seasons GARDENDESIGN - MARCH 2016

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*Every gardener knows under the cloak of winter lies a miracle...  
a seed waiting to sprout,  
a bulb opening to light,  
a bud straining to unfurl.  
And the anticipation nurtures our dreams.*  
- Barbara Winkler

( Spring --- Soon, very soon Saskatoon !)



- perennial Bergenia stays green even in Winter.  
Come Spring, it's one of the first to perk up & produce flowers - amazing that!

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## COURTYARDS ( & you thought they were only for large estates!)

Courtyards - Ahhhhh! The term always makes me think of sunny, walled gardens tucked within castles in the days of Damsels & Knights. This month's topic kind of carries on last month's theme where we looked at ways to enhance your front yard. A courtyard might sound a bit pretentious but the reality is courtyards of today, tho' much more practical, are every bit as romantic & definitely a touch European (or Spanish or early Roman!) Think of how many hotels & restaurants offer primo seating in their 'courtyard'. They really work well in modern landscapes either as 'pocket gardens' in side yards, or most popular - as front entries. As often as I suggest them for front yards when planning new yard landscapes, I have always found them a bit of a tough sell in Saskatchewan. Maybe because here, they are a bit of a novelty. However, the clients I have sold on the idea are always very pleased upon completion & they end up loving the 'unused' space that becomes more functional.



While searching for courtyard pictures online - I was actually struck by how few good examples there were. They are so wonderful for a number of reasons. First off, a front yard is what I consider your more public space - where you interact with the postman or the neighbour, what you see when you come & go; the first impression of your yard.



It is often not the place where most people want to spend the majority of their time outdoors - the back yard with it's privacy usually trumps that choice. However a courtyard can become really just an enlarged or oversized front entry serving much the same purpose as a porch yet developed instead at ground level.

Secondly, by the sheer fact the front yard is not a place where much time is spent - it offers the opportunity to take that unused portion of real estate & make use of it! You likely won't use your front court yard as much as your deck or patio yet it still serves as a functional space. The courtyard size doesn't have to be large - 10' x 12' across will suffice. That will allow placement of a stunning plant pot, calming water feature, a striking bit of statuary or my all-time favourite - boulders!



• even a charming bistro table & chairs create a welcoming look

Another idea you might entertain is to develop the centre with a miniature rock garden & place seating to take advantage of different views. Consider too, how it might look year 'round when viewed from your living or dining room window. Possibilities really are endless!

The xeriscape trend to doing away with as much lawn as possible makes this a very real alternative & fuels a good argument in favour of a courtyard. It's much easier to give a small courtyard an occasional sweeping than have to water & mow the same space repeatedly.

If you need even more convincing, developing your own front courtyard makes a real impact in the curb appeal of your home. What looks more welcoming than a generous open space just before you reach the front door? It can make even the smallest entryway look grand as you can see below!



It also creates a perfect spot for visitors to gather upon arrival or departure. PLUS! What a perfect opportunity to showcase a seasonal display at Christmas, Halloween or Easter!

Courtyards can be very private, semi-private or simply a space defined with beds. Shrubs, fencing, raised beds or stonework become the 'walls' & they can take any height. You might have a 6' high privacy screening for complete privacy.



If you have a 4' high surround, you have privacy when sitting, yet are open to view when standing or walking. You may want to have your site line open completely & just define the courtyard with perennials or low shrubs.



*\* only a few feet high - this manmade 'wall' offers a sense of definition to the space*

Then again, a combination of varying heights creates a sense of drama.

Having another exposure to appreciate in your great outdoors is a bonus benefit. Sometimes your deck or patio can have too much or too little sun but your front yard might just offer that little bit of space where you can enjoy welcome shade or the warming, early morning sunshine.

Anyhoo - enough of my thoughts - I think you can tell that I am a huge fan of Front Courtyards & can guarantee we will be seeing them popping up more frequently in neighbourhoods everywhere! Hopefully I've offered you a different perspective of your own front yard.



- tiny courtyard making good use of space under an overhang

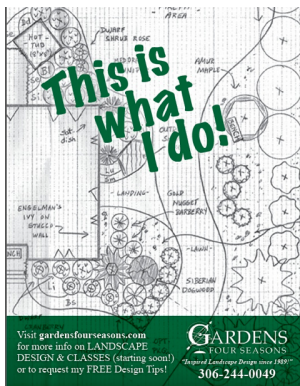
During a recent session of my Landscape Design Class - I was showing off my DESIGN IDEA Binder that I carry with me to client's homes. It has pictures of a variety of landscape design features that I'd put together a number of years ago. It struck me that it is kind of my own portable version of PINTEREST or HOUZZ!

Speaking of which, you DON'T necessarily have to sign up for Houzz or Pinterest to view my online pages! Simply click one of the following links & experience an escape to another world:

<https://www.pinterest.com/gardens4seasons/boards/>  
<http://www.houzz.com/pro/neeeeeee2/gardens-four-seasons>

If you haven't already - rush out & get your copy of the SASKATOON HOME MAGAZINE - exciting Spring edition! (or read it online at - <https://issuu.com/saskatoonhome/magazine/docs/skhomespring2016/1?e=1825134/33697166>)

Chock full of everything that is Home in Saskatoon AND you'll likely notice my new advert. :)



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

**AMBER JUBILEE NINEBARK - *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Amber Jubilee'**

What a shameless showstopper this shrub is! It maintains colour right from first bud break to late Autumn when the hues increase in intensity gradually changing to lime green & then purple. There are many other varieties of Ninebarks, ranging from green to gold to burgundy to ombre hues. Nevertheless, the Amber Jubilee type is increasing in popularity not only because of the spectacular colour but also because it is very hardy & easy to grow.

Even tho' they are often touted as a good shade plant - I would give it at least 6 hours of sunlight or more if possible. It colours up lots more depending on how much sunshine it's exposed to. Older wood produces contrasting dark green leaves which only add to it's appeal.

A mature spread & height of 5' makes it a choice selection for a sunny spot in your yard!





- Spring blossoms develop into reddish seed heads

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Gardenscape - April 8 - 10! (hope to see you there!)

Click this link for further info - <http://www.gardenscapeshow.ca/index.html>



Prairieland Park is proud to present  
Saskatchewan Blue Cross Gardenscape.  
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#### READER FEEDBACK

I received a fare bit of positive feedback from January GARDENDESIGNS - STYLES of GARDENS.

Any Ideas on Design you'd like to see more of? I'd love to hear from you!

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#### DESIGN BRILLIANCE

The BEES need us! Normally I comment on DESIGN BRILLIANCE but just had mis it up a bit after I saw this commercial. A BRILLIANT collaboration between Vesey's Seeds (of PEI) & Cheerios.

**WARNING:** this commercial may give you shivers & overall feelings of happiness - Enjoy!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bMOUVYsRO4&t=12>



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#### GARDENDESIGN in April - let's take a look at - CLEVER CONTAINER PLANTINGS

Questions on which is the right Surfacing for your next project?  
Then simply request a GARDENDESIGN Back Issue on SURFACING!

Reply to this email with SURFACINGplease & it will be laid out in front of you!



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DID YOU KNOW? - I never, Ever, EVER share my email list - EVER! :)

→ [info@gardenscape.ca](mailto:info@gardenscape.ca) from GARDENDESIGN please reply to this email with NO THANKS!