

GARDENS Four Seasons

GARDENDESIGN - JAN./FEB. 2018

“This garden has a soul, I know its moods.”

- Leigh Hunt (19th century poet)



(what an incredibly poetic way to think of any garden, even one on a BALCONY - thanks Leigh!)

BALCONY GARDENS

I'm flattered so many people inquired as to whether or not I was still offering GARDENDESIGN! The answer is a resounding YES! I had a wonderfully busy 2017 & had to take a few months off the E-Newsletter but now am back - as full of Landscape Design ideas as ever!

So, now, the GARDENDESIGN you have all been patiently waiting for!



This time of year is always great for slowing down & assessing our gardens & what we'd like to accomplish for next year. So I figured this would be a perfect time to discuss BALCONY GARDENS to get a jump start on 2018.



Most of you have full size yards to live in but a lot of the ideas & principles used for Balconies can be easily translated into any small space on your property that you choose to develop. At the very least, perhaps you know of someone living in a Condo or Apartment that would love discovering how to enhance the only outdoor space they might have!

MY BALCONY STORY

I recall having to live in an apartment for awhile when I first became a Single Mom. I wasn't happy having to call an apartment home since I had never done so but I thought to myself - well - it's temporary & I am going to make the best of it since it had a fireplace as well as a balcony - & yep - you bet - I planned to garden anyway even if just in a 4' x 10' space!

My sons, just 3 & 5 at the time, helped me set up some used garden pots & we hauled pails full of dirt up flights of stairs out onto the outdoor space. I couldn't afford saucers for the pots but the balcony surface was a plastic membrane so I figured it would be easy to mop up any excess water. (I think you can tell where this is going!) Once everything was ready, we set about planting carrots, peas & a few flowers all the while enjoying the outdoors & the morning sunshine flooding our east side 'terrace'. We were so excited when it came time to water our newly sown garden & sit back & savour our collaboration.

About 5 minutes later there was an angry knock on our apartment door. The lady living directly below us had only just taken her Saturday morning to clean her patio window directly below ours. Well, she was madder than a wet hen to say the least! The balcony surface was sloped back towards the building & I had thought it odd not to see any water that had seeping out of the pots. The excess water had found it's way down the wall onto her window. Ooops!

After making my embarrassed apology I ensured there'd not be a repeat of a muddy "Niagara Falls"!

Speaking of Niagara Falls - check out this clever vertical planter!



So that is lesson number one when planning your Balcony Garden - allow for proper drainage of any planting containers.

Then ensure you have a ready water source. Most balconies don't have a hose attachment outside so keep a light weight watering can on hand. (all the better if that watering can ties in with your outdoor decor!) Never rely on Mother Nature to do all your watering just because it is out of doors!

Next - assess your available space.

Orientation - Which direction does your outdoor paradise-to-be face? Shady north side, sun blasted south side, bright morning light on the east side or sweltering hot sun on the west side?

Exposure to the Elements - Consider any open or exposed areas. Do you have nearby large trees that offer a buffer from the wind & rain? Or are you totally open & exposed to Mother Nature without any other sheltering features such as other buildings or canopies? You won't want to plan sun-loving succulents if your property faces south but is completely shaded by a large tree!

Micro-Climate Control - Create a buffer by positioning wind or sun shelters! Yep - manmade features such as lattice panels or sun shades go a long way to gain bit of control over your environment. Make them do double duty by growing Sweet Peas or Cucumbers on them. No wait! make them do triple duty while becoming a part of your decor!

This goes for not only sheltering your plantings but also for creating a wind/sun buffer for your own lounging comfort. Be sure to securely fasten any manmade features whether they serve a purpose or are purely esthetic. I learned my lesson with a simple flow of water but I have seen the wind carry full-size BBQs off balconies - better safe than sorry!



You'll also want to consider surfacing options - the sky's the limit since you don't have put down anything permanent unless you choose to.

Think of what you'd like to feel on your bare feet as you slip outdoors - smooth wood planks, lawn, crushed rock or a soft outdoor mat.....





Now comes the best part - planning the bare bones of your vignette. Seating options, as you can tell from my pics, are positively endless!

Source decorative pots that mean something to you.

Always keep in mind the size of the space you are working in & keep all the elements in Scale & Proportion. It goes without saying you don't want furniture too big but you also don't want items too small.

A good rule of thumb is to have about 1/3 seating & 1/3 open space available for 'traffic' & the balance filled with greenery. This is just simple rule since you'll want to cater to

your own preferences. Also remember you can make use of the ‘walls’, ‘ceiling’ & railing to display plants. There are many ways to trick the eye into perceiving more room than is actually there & gardening ‘vertically’ is one of them.



I often say - planning a small space requires much more careful consideration than a large one. You want to make the BEST use of every square inch & make it look as spacious as possible!

Select a personal colour palette - perhaps all cool blue or white tones or a riot of every hue in the rainbow! This goes for not only decor & flower colour but foliage as well!

Tying in with my GARDENS Four Seasons belief - I highly recommend utilizing seasonal displays if you can view your landscape easily from inside. What a charming idea to create an Autumn or Christmas vignette to delight in throughout the cold seasons while snug & warm inside!

Also highly endorsed is the use of water - either a Tub Garden or Birdbath - how FUN!

& don't forget the magical effect of night lighting - exquisite!



Enjoy the process of planning your mini outdoor paradise. The journey really is half the fun! Consider practical options like a 'Railing' table.



Once everything is complete, you can grab a cool beverage on a warm day while stretching like a cat & luxuriate in your verdant surroundings!

Tips for Planting Annuals in Pots (a sure fire way to have incredible potted annual displays!)

- * use as big a vessel as possible (the larger it is, the less you have to water)
- * start with a clean pot (if using one that is second hand - remove any dirt & rinse with water that has a few drops of bleach added, then rinse again with clear water - this will ensure a clean start for both plants & soil!)
- * if using a clay pot for a full sun or semi-shade location, ensure you line it with a plastic pot (pot-in-pot) of corresponding size. (clay tends to 'wick' moisture out of the soil, particularly in direct sun) Ditto for metal pots - a pot-in-pot arrangement will be gentler on those delicate roots on blazing hot days!
- * cover the bottom with a drainage layer of styrofoam packing pieces or 'peanuts', styrofoam egg cartons or squished plastic bottles. (Rock, gravel or broken pieces of clay pots can also be utilized but remember it will increase the overall weight.)
- * fill the container with your drainage layer so you'll have a 12" depth of soil & allow for an extra couple of inches so the soil is not right at the very top.
- * prepare your soil mix of 1/3 garden soil, 1/3 peat moss & 1/3 vermiculite or perlite. Sprinkle in some granular time release fertilizer (according to package directions). Alternately you

can use Sunshine Potting Soil Mix #1 - a great pre-mixed potting soil available at Early's Farm & Garden - it has fertilizer already in it!

- * place 12" of soil in pot, water until it seeps out the drainage holes (yes - you NEED those!) & top up the soil level to within an inch or two of the pot rim. Your container is now ready to accept annual plants. Most annuals should be spaced 4" apart to allow for full coverage in a short time - don't skimp here! (some exceptions to this rule would be 'Wave' Petunias or Fountain Grass - check the maximum size your selections will reach & space with that in mind)

Remember to water well & often depending on whether your pots are in shade or sun - a lot of annuals are NOT forgiving in the moisture department.

& a few other tips:

- * remove spent flowers regularly to encourage fresh blooming!
- * try growing chives (as annuals) for fresh salad clippings.....
.....they offer a nice spiky accent in a mixed planting & reward your efforts with perky mauve blossoms too!
- * grow a potted tea rose as an annual - they love the heat & sun. Plant Bacopa around the outer edge of pot & enjoy!
- * seed evening scented stock in planters with larger plants - they are not pretty but blend in nicely & are well worth the fragrance on balmy Summer evenings!

Below are a couple of lists of reliable annuals to grow on balconies - both shade & sun lovers:

ANNUALS - for HOT, SUNNY Xeriscape areas

(full sun to semi-shade but *prefer* to bask in the heat & sunshine!)

~ = scented

x = excellent cut flowers

! = reliable self-seeders

6" - 8" High

African Daisy *x*
Ageratum
Alyssum ~
Aster *x*
Baby's Breath *x*
California Poppy !
Citrosa (mosquito plant) ~
Cosmos (dwarf) *x* !
Dianthus
Dusty Miller
Heliotrope ~
Ice Plant
Marigold (dwarf)
Johnny Jump-ups !
Livingstone Daisy
Marigold (dwarf)
Nasturtium
Pansies *x* !
Periwinkle
Petunia ~
Poppies !
Portulaca (Moss Rose)
Rudbeckia (Toto) *x*
Schizanthus (Butterfly Flower) *x*
Snapdragon
Zinnia (dwarf) *x*

12" - 18" High

Aster *x*
Bachelor Buttons *x* !
Calendula *x* !
Carnation ~ *x*
Citronella
Coreopsis !
Evening Scented Stock ~
Forget-Me-Not !
Flowering Kale
Gazania *x*
Geranium ~
Lavender
Marigold *x*
Petunia
Poppies !
Snapdragon *x*
Statice (Sea Lavender) *x*
Stocks ~ *x*
Strawflower *x*
Sunflower (dwarf) *x*
Tea Rose (hybrid) ~ *x*
Zinnia *x*

2' - 2 1/2' High

Aster *x*
Dames Rocket ~ !
Gaillardia *x*
Gladiolus *x*
Green Bells of Ireland *x*
Nicotiana ~
Osteospermum
Rudbeckia *x*
Zinnia *x*

Over 3' High

Amaranthus (Love lies Bleeding) *x*
Burning Bush (Summer Cypress)
Cosmos *x* !
Fountain Grass *x*
Hollyhock !
Lavaterra (Malva) *x*
Rudbeckia *x*
Sunflower *x*

Vines - Hanging/Trailing

Bacopa - Calibrachoa (dwarf petunia)
Dichondra - English Ivy - Licorice Vine
Lotus Vine – Ivy Geranium
Morning Glory – Petunia
Scarlet Runner Bean - Sweet Peas
Sweet Potatoe Vine
Thunbergia (Black Eyed Susan Vine)

ANNUALS - Shade Loving & Thrive in Pots or Planters!

Begonias

Balsam (Impatiens balsamina)

Browallia

Butterfly Flower (Schizanthus)

Coleus

English Ivy (Trailing)

Fuschia (Cascading)

Gerbera Daisy

Globe Amaranth

Impatiens

Ivy Geranium (Trailing Geranium)

Mimulus (Monkey Flower)

Nicotiana (Flowering Tobacco)

Pansy

Sweet Potatoe Vine (Ipomoea batatas) - chartreuse or burgundy leaves!

Torenia (Wishbone Flower)



- pretty little Torenia!

UPCOMING EVENTS

DESIGN your own DREAM YARD!

I know some days it seems so far off but we ARE getting closer & closer to being able to enjoy the warmth OUTDOORS once more.

I have set the dates for my Landscape Design Classes & they begin in March!

DESIGN your DREAM YARD

In just 5 fun & lively sessions

- learn the clever way to measure & draw your yard to scale
- create a personalized list of shrubs, trees & perennials
- save time & money by discovering low maintenance methods used by pros!

All classes held in Saskatoon & run 5 weeks consecutively on your start day

\$299! BOOK EARLY!



"Inspired Landscape Design since 1989"

NEW & EXISTING YARDS
Mon. March 19 - 10am-noon *or* 6:30-8:30pm
Thurs. March 22 - 10am-noon *or* 6:30-8:30pm
Sat. March 24 - 10am-noon

Find out more by calling Denise at (306) 244-0049
Or visit my website under "Classes" - www.gardensfourseasons.com

Simply choose the start date you prefer & send me an email to Register. Once registered your classes will take place starting on that date & continue for the next 4 weeks.

& don't forget !

GARDENSCAPE

March 23 – 25, 2018

Prairieland Park, Saskatoon, SK



for more info - <http://www.gardenscapeshow.ca>



PLANT OF THE MONTH

LAVENDER



While I am not a fan of Lavender scented perfumes or soaps - I adore the scent of fresh lavender crushed between my fingers or when I brush by the planter on my steps. It is not a hardy perennial in SK but grows wonderfully in a container set in the hot, hot sunshine.

There are many different types of Lavender from Mediterranean to English so don't restrict yourself to just one kind. They grow easily from seed & most varieties reach about a foot in height tho' some can grow up to 2'-3'. Delight in the blossoms for about a month in mid-summer & then cut & dry the plant in Autumn for potpourri. Nice!

DESIGN BRILLIANCE

I just had to show you this pic of the brilliant use of a tree branch! It adds not only a true touch of nature but creates a charming accent & a place to add hanging lanterns or chimes.

So very cool!




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Pour a fresh cup of coffee & spend some time looking thru' my extensive collection of BALCONY pics on my **PINTEREST** site - I have the most images on this Board than I do of any other topic! (Can you tell I'm Balcony Obsessed?)

Go to my website - [www.gardensfourseasons.com](http://www.gardensfourseasons.com) & click on the



icon & voila !

OR simply click the following link:

<https://www.pinterest.ca/gardens4seasons/balconies/>



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**The Allure of GRASSES in your Garden  
is the Mar./Apr. GARDENDESIGN topic  
- watch for it sooner than you might expect!**

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I've done a number of **BACK ISSUES** that  
tie nicely into the BALCONY GARDEN theme.

Choose from:

- CLEVER CONTAINER PLANTING
- FENCE & WALL ART
- COURTYARDS

Request any or all of them & I'll send zip them to your inbox right away!

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Feel free to forward this to any friends!  
*(or they can email me to request their own copy!)*

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