

GARDENS Four Seasons

GARDENDESIGN

SEPT./OCT. 2018

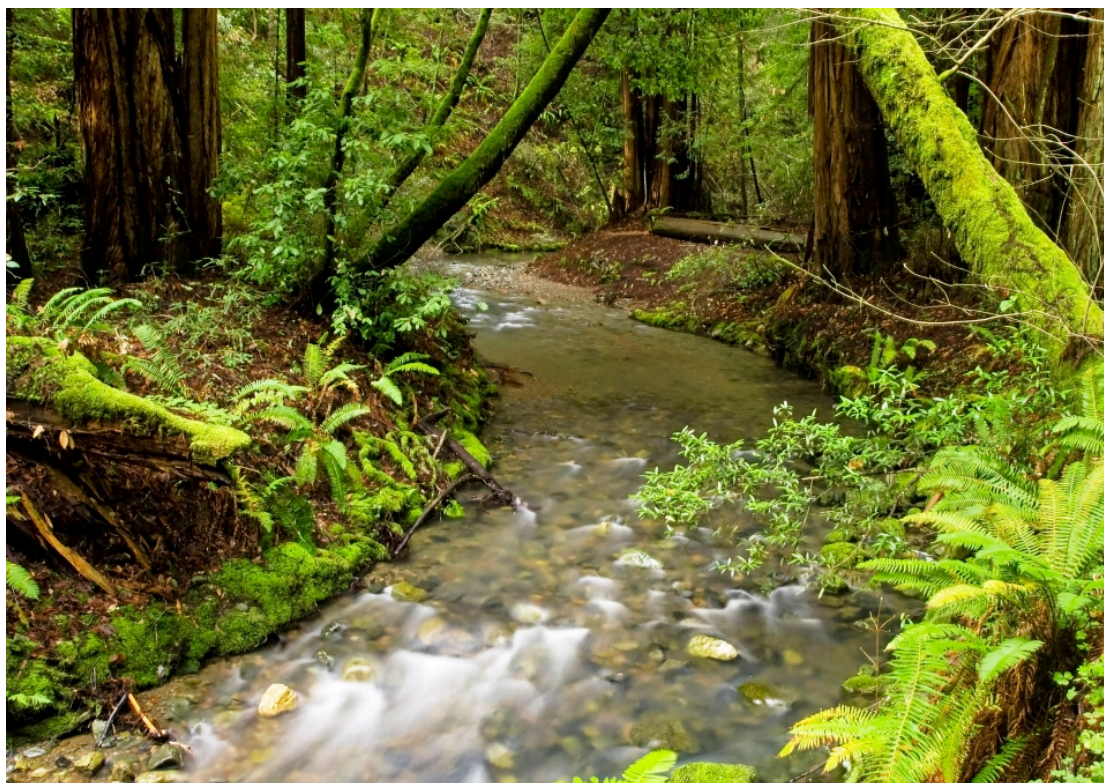
MEDITATION GARDENS

“Climb the mountains & get their good tidings.

*Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine
flows into trees.*

*The winds will blow their own freshness into you,
& the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like
autumn leaves.”*

- John Muir



- (many thanks for that thought John - even tho' I first read it awhile ago at a Landscape Design Conference in Virginia - it still gives me shivers & explains the way I feel about Gardens & Nature in general. You don't have to climb a mountain to experience these 'good tidings'!)

MEDITATION GARDENS

When I really had some time to mull over the idea of Meditation or Yoga or Serenity Gardens or Sacred Spaces, it became abundantly clear they are one & the same as what I call



my Secret Garden. They all require the same - Privacy, a Sense of Enclosure & a Small Space big enough for just one or two people. In fact I dedicated a couple of issues of GARDENDESIGN to Secret Gardens a few years back.

Tho' I've attempted Yoga & Meditation I have discovered my own 'Zen' appears when I'm lost in an outdoor project or just the simple act of weeding. I get that contented feeling & become so wrapped up in the moment - I lose track of time. I'm sure all of you can identify with this emotion!

Frankly, my whole yard kinda affords me that relaxing experience yet I do find the more private a spot is - the more profound the effect. Which is why I've had a Meditation Garden since I first bought my house. Mine is a situated where most people would not notice right away - even when entering my back yard - it has become one of my most enjoyable places!

It is located in my side yard & measures out at just 7' wide & 24' long & is currently undergoing 'refreshing'. The fence dividing front from back was right in the centre & made absolutely no good use of space. So I pushed the fence line towards the front to create a larger, useable expanse & constructed a rock garden at the far end to draw the eye. Then a small raised bed along the house was added, accessed by a zig zag flagstone path which fooled the eye into thinking the area was larger.

I used to think it was so private since my neighbour's house has no windows on that side! Below is what it looked like about 25 years ago.



Check out the photo below - this shows what it looks like at the moment. My son Oliver built the new fence in a different pattern than my other fencing. He pointed out it would not only define the space as separate & special but provide a more updated look. I opted for 'rocky' window wells to tie in with the rock garden (nicer, more open view from inside than metal!).

There'll be an embedded rock surface in the center for seating & an entrance arbour where a grape vine will someday flourish.
Ah-h-h - dreams!



- once complete I will post updated pics!

So!
Enough about me & my plans! How can you create your own Yoga Garden?

1st off - choose a location. You might be fortunate enough to have a small, unused side yard. Maybe yours is between the garage & fence or you have a nook behind a large tree. If none of these options are available do not dismay! Simply choose your spot & *create* privacy there. Decide whether you want sun or shade or both. If you don't have a separate area carve out one section of your garden for a sanctuary - or unexpectedly, a small porch or condo balcony can work! Aim for a location where there is little noise (which is pretty tough in the city - more about that later!) - you'll want it as quiet as possible.



- a great use of space in a side yard (wish we could grow bamboo however tall upright perennials are a great trade off!)

I recently helped design a Sacred Space for a client in her front yard. Most are located in the back because that's generally your more private area - still, believe me when I tell you the same can be accomplished in the front. Think of it - how many people actually come to our front doors - not as many as in past decades that's for sure!

Secondly - take a good hard look at where you'll need that critical privacy. Be adventurous & think of man-made privacy or plantings. Greenery will take longer to establish but



delivers a more serene feel. On the other hand - a fence or privacy panel lets you easily display any sort of decor you desire in order to personalize!

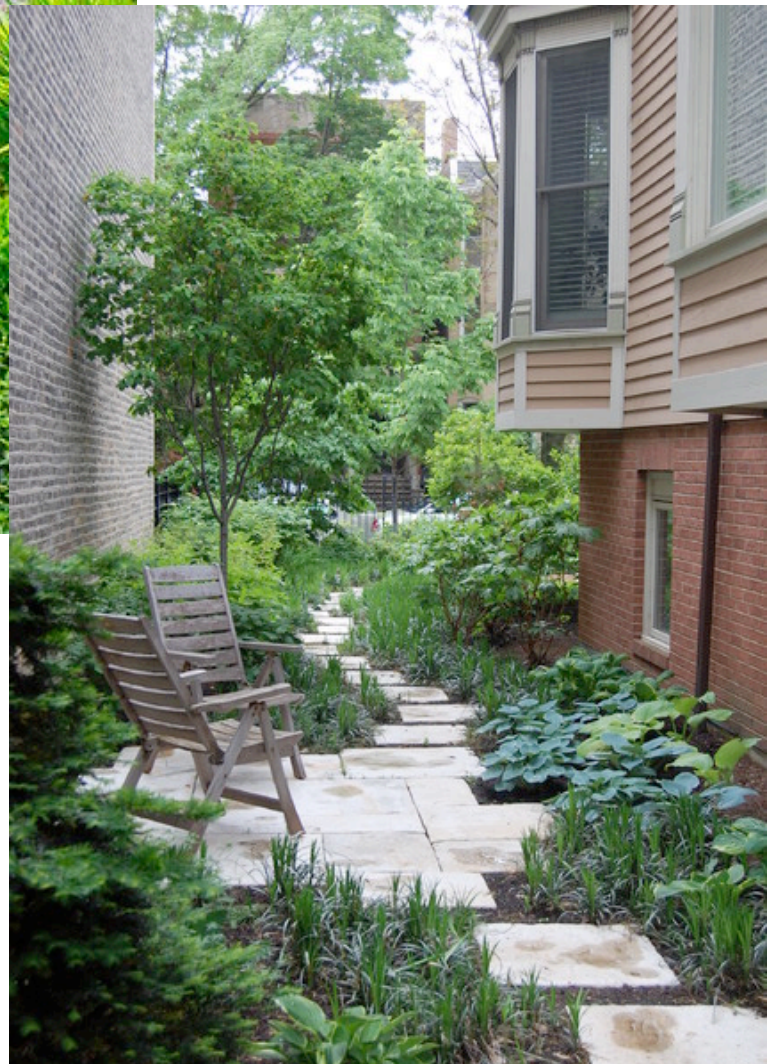
If you can, blend soft landscaping (plants) into man-made - ie: a vine scrambling up a trellis on a side wall or fence or try positioning mid-height plants in front of taller ones & continue those same mid-height plants along the base of a wall or fence. This gives you visual fluidity (hey, I just came up with that term - think I'll use it more often!)



The 3rd aspect to consider is to decide how you'd like to create a sense of entry from the adjoining area. A gate is one option as is an arbour. You could even have a gate arbour or simply a tall plant off to one side! Your garden can viewed directly on or it can be tucked just around a corner - not immediately viewable - if you've enough room.

Step 4 is coming up with what will become your level surface material for seating or walkways.

As a general rule of thumb - a softer surface is called for when you want to add seating. Try finely chipped cedar chips as a covering. (the scent is *heavenly!*) Need something more



durable? Try a layer of crusher dust - as easy to maintain as cedar chips but drains better. If you are planning on using the area for Yoga or other physical pursuits - I suggest a paving stone or other similar hard surface that can easily be swept clean & provides support for a mat.

& Now --- are you ready for the *really fun* stuff?!

Number 5 is adding Decor to personalize your space & make it all the more inviting!

A simple way is to incorporate all 4 elements - candles for *fire*, maybe chimes or a flexible tall grass for the *wind* to play with. Of course you will have the *earth* of your garden. Nonetheless, I am a big fan of strategically placing a good sized boulder or two - for seating, as a table or for effect - they add a sense of permanence - another *form* of earth.



Don't forget *water*! I believe every garden - particularly a private one - should have water represented in some form. Water - either moving or still should be

available for viewing, touching or listening to or cleansing.

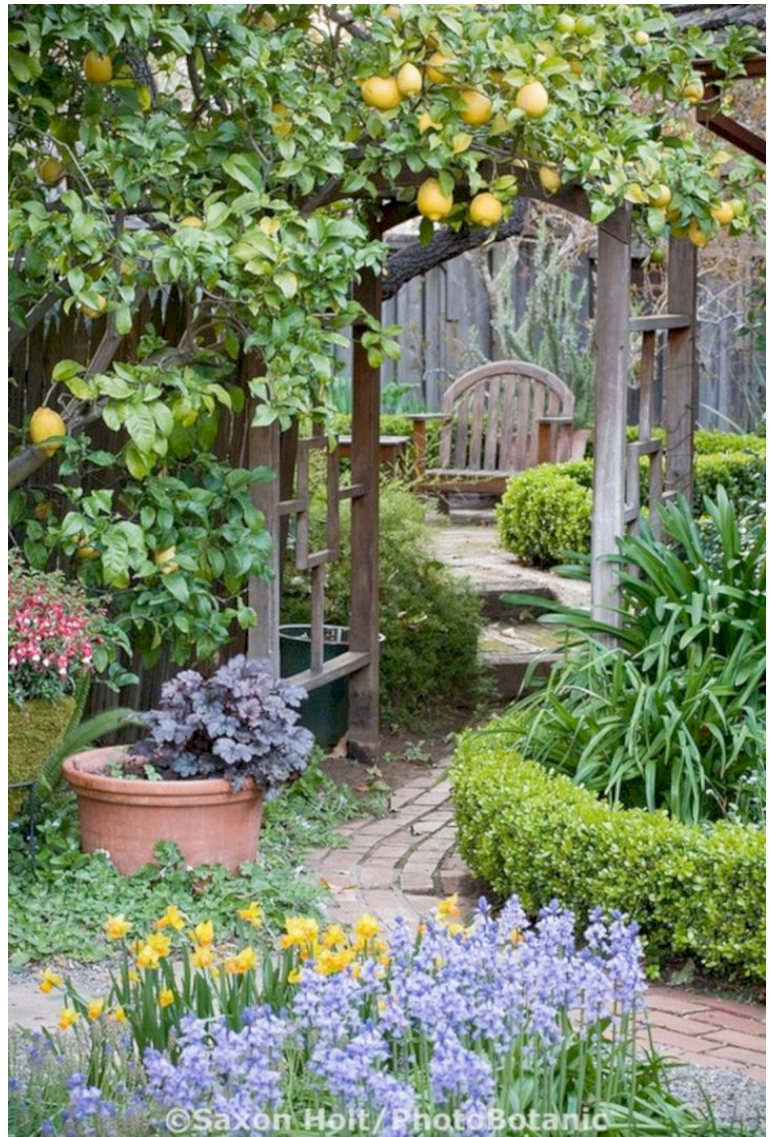
Also incorporate the 5 Senses:

SIGHT - that goes without saying - you feel a sense of calm as soon as you behold your garden!

SMELL - always have something scented - preferably all Summer such as an annual Evening Scented Stock.

SOUND - wind rustling thru' leaves or a privacy screen or the sound of water trickling can add to the relaxing feel & buffer outside noise. (bring out earphones to enjoy your fave tunes if all else fails!)

TASTE - add some fruiting plants or perchance a small patch of fresh carrots or peas - fresh picked eating cannot be beat!



TOUCH - Drill drainage holes in an old bird bath & fill with fine white sand to run your fingers thru' - very sensual!

Any seating should be comfy with perhaps an ottoman or a side table nearby.....conceivably, even a hammock!



Add vertical decor such as a mirror - super easy to do! Just select an old one you really gravitate to & run a bead of silicone on the back to seal the mirror to the frame- voila - an outdoor mirror!



Placing Decor is so much fun to complete your relaxing zone - create your own finishing touches - & don't forget lighting for evening breather!



Do you have a Space that you would like to share? I'd love to see what you've done in your own yard - send me your pics!



PLANT OF THE MONTH

CATMINT (Nepeta)

Ok - this is ONE of my new favourite perennials! I just LOVE IT!

This amazing little choice, often used as a substitute for lavender, is extremely drought tolerant once established.



- Nepeta
'Purrsian Blue'
(or is it
Purrrrrr-r-r-sian
Blue? :)

Tolerating moist or dry soil, it really thrives with even moisture. As much as it is a true sun-worshipper - it'll perform reasonably well in light shade. The greyish-green foliage offers a great colour contrast to any mixed border & offers up a strong pungent scent when the leaves or stems are crushed.

-Nepeta
'Walker's Low'



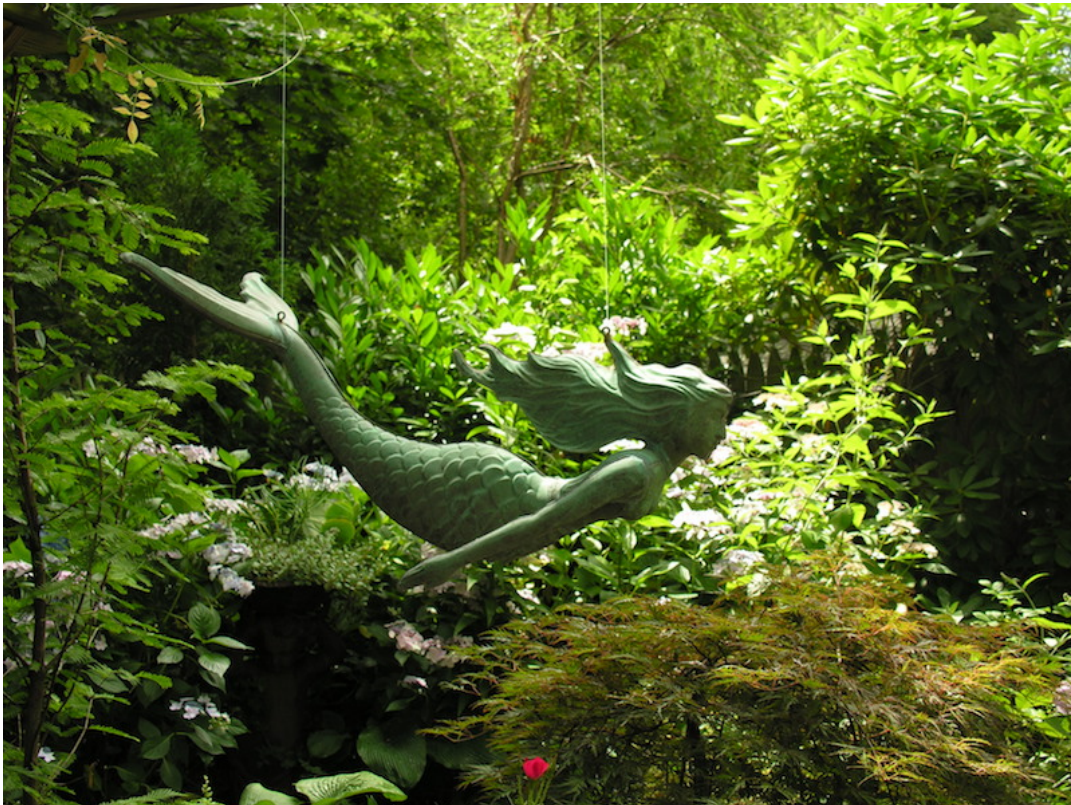
The plant itself presents well before & after blooming. Magnificent from mid-July to the end of August - it puts on a great show - endless clumps of spiky lavender blossoms. for weeks! Choose varieties from 1'-2' or 2'-3' in height.

As with any type of mint, it is an aggressive spreader - normally taking over anything smaller than itself & so must be kept in check. This trait however, works in it's favour when mass planting in large beds. Remember - the right plant in the right place = successful gardening!



DESIGN BRILLIANCE

Imagine a willowy mermaid undulating & weaving her way thru' the verdant backdrop of *your* Serenity Garden.



Mesmerizing!



In **GARDENDESIGN** for **NOV./DEC.**
I'll discuss the fine aspects of **FOCAL POINTS** in your
landscape. What they are & how to use them to your advantage.

Who knows, possibly you'll get some ideas for Christmas
Giving & Receiving ;)



GARDENDESIGN BACK ISSUES?

Some of my back issues might help with ideas for your very
own MEDITATION/YOGA/SECRET/SERENITY GARDEN or
SACRED SPACE - choose from:

- Fence & Wall Art
- Garden Decor
- Privacy Screens
- Privacy Planting
- Secret Gardens
- Surfacing

Just reply to this email with the titles you'd like to check out!



Meantime take some time *just for you* & check out my SECRET/MEDITATION GARDEN Board on Pinterest - click on the link below & it will take you right there!

<https://www.pinterest.ca/gardens4seasons/secret-garden/>



Feel free to forward this to any friends!

(or they can email me to request their own copy!)

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

* to UNSUBSCRIBE from GARDENDESIGN please reply to this email with NO THANKS!
