

Gardening in Small Spaces

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Introductions, Prelude, & Epistemology

Metasequoia glyptostroboides - Dawn Redwood

Meta (A different kind / different order) sequoia (of sequoia)
glyptostroboides (that looks like *Glyptostrobus*)

Rules to follow when creating a well-balanced mixed garden

Rule #1

Choose a garden style. Many people let their gardens evolve, but for a better effect it is best to decide what type of “feel” or “look” you want in your garden. You have two choices, either a formal or an informal style. Formal gardens include planting beds designed in geometric shapes with pathways and walks that have straight or angular lines. Formal gardens have a definite pattern that is balanced and symmetrical. If you divide a formal garden down the middle, the two sides will be mirror images.

Elements in a formal garden include containers, paths, patios, pergolas, statuary and ornaments, clipped hedges, topiaries, ponds and fountains, seats/benches, hanging baskets, sunken gardens, walled gardens, arbors, steps, and rockeries.

If a formal look is not for you, then your style is informal. In this type of garden, the influence of the designer is expressed more subtly. Free-flowing curves are used both in planting beds and walkways. While many of the elements in an informal garden are the same as those used in a formal garden, they are often more playful in nature. Sometimes, they can be downright whimsical, including the perennial favorite pink flamingo.

Rule #2

Great gardens start with a backdrop. A backdrop provides the framework around which you build your garden. Effective backdrops are combinations of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs and sometimes fences or walls. A great garden has a sense of enclosure and starts at the border of the property and tiers downward to a central lawn area, patio, deck, water feature, or walkway.

Rule #3

Use plants with different characteristics. All landscape plants possess specific characteristics that can help you decide how they should be used in different garden situations. These characteristics include flower power, foliage color, texture, and form (vertical, spherical, and horizontal). All plants possess at least one dominant characteristic, but some may possess more than one, making them useful for more than one reason. An example is 'Opal' basil, which has bold, purple foliage and a spherical form. Another is Artemisia 'Powis Castle' with its silver-gray foliage and strikingly soft texture. Determine a plant's major characteristic and use that information to guide you as to where to use it in your landscape.

Rule #4

Use effective combinations. Effective gardens include combinations of plants with different characteristics. (See Rule #3.) The secret to any good plant combination is combining plants that possess different dominant characteristics. For example, an ideal plant combination would include one plant with flower power, one with pronounced texture, one with striking foliage color, and one of each of the three different plant forms. In other words, the perfect combo would comprise a strong vertical form plant, a strong spherical form plant, and a strong horizontal form plant. Of these three forms, one plant would possess a strong flowering habit, one would have colorful foliage, and one would have a contrasting texture. Your plant choices will communicate your garden's unique personality.

Rule #5

Create tiers. Too often this simple, common-sense rule is disregarded, which creates disharmony in the landscape. Start by creating a list of the plants you want to include in your garden. Then identify the highest point of the garden, whether it is the back of a border or the center of an island bed. Tier down to the front of the garden, planting according to height: tall plants in the back of the bed, medium-sized plants in the middle and small plants in the front. This creates a visually pleasing landscape that allows your gaze to move smoothly through the garden.

Rule #6

Arrange plants in drifts. Drifts are groups of three or more plants of one species or variety. Plants used in drifts produce drama and a more pleasing visual effect than individual plants. How many plants you need to create a visually dramatic drift will vary. Some plants, like Canna, Banana or Cardoon, which can reach a 6-foot spread, grow so large that one plant can create an effective drift. Plant so that your drifts merge into each other so that the garden flows. If you plant in long, narrow drifts, you'll tend to get more show and more color than if you plant the same number of plants in a circle. Create your drifts using Rule #3, where you drift from a plant with lots of flower power, to one with foliage color interest, to one with contrasting texture, with each possessing a contrasting form. For visual harmony, you want to flow from a vertical form into a spherical form into a horizontal form.

Rule #7

Consider year-round interest. To create a landscape that is colorful, dramatic, and interesting all year, combine plants that will peak in their performance at different times. Plants with colorful foliage and those that flower during the entire growing season can carry your landscape from spring through frost. Make a list of plants by various categories to help guide your selections.

Winter is the season with the most limited number of plants available for providing landscape interest. Evergreen trees and shrubs are good to give your garden life during this season, but don't forget to add interest as well by selecting plants with colorful bark or winter berries. Evergreen perennials, some of which are also fragrant, can add interest during this cold, dark season. Try Rosemary 'Arp', various thymes, assorted sedums, and Lenten Rose. Fall is another time when it is nice to enliven the landscape. Pineapple sage, Mexican bush sage, Mexican tarragon, Goldenrod, Joe pye weed, and Tansy are all good fall bloomers.

Rule #8

Add fragrance, sound, and motion to the landscape. Strategically placing strong aromatic herbs in your landscape adds a dimension of enjoyment to your garden. Consider placing fragrant herbs near walks, paths, patios, porches, and decks where they can easily be brushed or touched releasing their scents. You can add motion and sound in the garden through the use of ornamental grasses and running water. Sea Oats and Ravenna Grass are among the grasses that easily move with the wind, and the rustling of their dried leaves can really grab your attention. Running water in a fountain or pond also adds sound and motion and is quite effective in creating interest.

Rule #9

Use color to tie the landscape together. Choose a color theme for your garden. Don't confuse the issue by using more than three dominate colors. Rather, use plants that repeat shades and hues throughout the garden. Repeating shades and hues of a particular color is referred to as "color echo." When used properly, color echo acts as the common thread that weaves its way through a garden, tying it all together.

Notes:

Don't Forget Your Basics

Any guide to design would be incomplete without a discussion of some basic design principles. You need to keep these in mind if you want to have a really stunning landscape. They include line, rhythm, balance and scale, focalization, and simplicity.

The **line** provides definition to the design. It leads your eye through the garden. You include line in the design through the outline or shape of the garden beds or the shape and outline of the lawn area. Be sure to not have bed lines that are fuzzy or too intricate. A few, gently flowing curves or long, straight angular lines are the most appealing lines in a design.

Great gardens have **rhythm**. Rhythm occurs when you repeat something in the garden, be it color, texture, or plants. Rhythm helps a garden to flow and adds to its sense of harmony.

Balance is the visual weight of the garden. A great garden has balance between its structures, plants, and garden accents. A great garden also *well scaled*, that is the plant material, structures, and garden accents are in proportion to one another.

Focalization is directing your eye to a portion of the garden. Every major portion of a garden should contain a focal point. Good examples of focal points are the front door of a home, a specimen plant, or garden accents such as a birdbath, birdhouse, statue, bench, or gazing ball.

Your garden should not be too busy with a salt and peppery mix of plants. By using drifts of plants (Rule #6) you create **simplicity** in the garden.

(Above "Rules" written by Dr. Sue Hamilton)

Books:

Latin for Gardeners, Lorraine Harrison

Bloom's Best Perennials and Grasses, Adrian Bloom

Gardening with Conifers, Adrian Bloom

The American Meadow Garden, John Greenlee

The Well-Designed Mixed Garden, Tracy DiSabato-Aust

Planting in a Post-Wild World, Thomas Rainer and Claudia West

Plants: My Pick 12

1. *Eutrochium dubium* 'Little Joe'
2. *Geranium* X 'Rozanne'
3. *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam' or x 'Full Moon'
4. *Hylotelephium spectabile* 'Herbstfreude' (Autumn Joy)
Sedum 'Pure Joy'
Sedum 'Matrona'
5. *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'
6. *Muhlenbergia capillaris*
For earlier bloom: *Muhlenbergia* 'Fast Forward' PPAF
7. Little Lime® *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Jane'
Hydrangea arborescens 'Mary Nell' (good pollinator choice)
Hydrangea macrophylla Twist-n-Shout® (good pollinator choice)
8. *Echinacea* X 'Cheyenne Spirit'
9. *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'
Rudbeckia fulgida var. *sullivantii* 'Little Goldstar'
10. *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
Perovskia atriplicifolia 'WALPPB' PEEK-A-BLUE® & 'Blue Jean Baby'
11. *Allium* spp.
Allium 'Millenium'
12. *Thuja occidentalis* 'Degroot's Spire'

Skinny Genes (small and slender trees)

Hibiscus syriacus, Rose of Sharon -Purple Pillar®

Liquidambar styraciflua 'Slender Silhouette' – Slender Silhouette Sweetgum

Liriodendron tulipifera 'Arnold' – Arnold Tuliptree

Cupressus nootkatensis, Weeping Alaskan Cedar - 'Green Arrow' or 'Pendula' or 'Van den Akker'

Juniperus virginiana 'Taylor' – Taylor Eastern Redcedar

Quercus × Upright Oaks - Kindred Spirit®, or Regal Prince®

Ginkgo biloba 'Grindstone' ('Grind Stone Lake') - Grindstone Ginkgo

Weeping Bald Cypress - *Taxodium distichum* 'Cascade Falls', or 'Falling Water'

Dwarf Bald Cypress - *Taxodium distichum* 'Peve Minaret'

Dwarf River Birch - *Betula nigra* | Fox Valley™

Acer palmatum 'Mikawa Yatsubusa'

Albizia julibrissin 'Chocolate Fountain' or 'Summer Chocolate' Mimosa

Cercis chinensis 'Don Egolf'

Magnolia virginiana 'Mattie Mae Smith'

Southern Magnolia - *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem', Teddy Bear®, 'Kay Parris', 'Alta'

Corylopsis spp. – Winterhazel

Amsonia hubrichtii – Arkansas Amsonia

Notes:

What's in a Plant Name?

Colors of Flowers or Foliage

- alba, albus — white
- arg, argenteus — silvery
- ater — black
- aurantiaca — orange
- aureus — golden
- aure, aurea, aureum — gold
- azurea, azureus — azure, sky blue
- caesius — blue gray
- caerulea — deep blue
- candidus — pure white, shiny
- canus — ashy gray, hoary
- carneus — flesh colored
- citrinus — yellow
- coeruleus — dark blue
- coccineus — scarlet
- concolor — one color
- croceus — yellow
- discolor — two or separate colors
- flava, flavum — yellow
- glaucus — covered with gray bloom
- griseum — gray
- incanus — gray, hoary
- lutea, luteus — reddish yellow
- miniata — of a reddish color
- nigra — black
- purpurea, purpureus — purple
- rosea — rose-colored
- rubens, ruber — red, ruddy
- sanguinea — blood-red
- viridis — green

Leaf Form

- acerifolius — maplelike leaves
- abr — delicate leaved
- angustifolius — narrow leaves
- aquifolius — spiny leaves
- buxifolius — leaves like boxwood
- ilicifolius — hollylike leaves
- lanceolata — lance-shaped
- laurifolius — laurel-like leaves
- longifolia — long-leaved

- macrophylla — large-leaved
- microphylla — small-leaved
- parvifolia — small-leaved
- parvifolius — small leaves
- palmate, palmatum — hand-shaped leaves
- rotundifolia — round-leaved
- salicifolius — willowlike leaves

Plant or Flower Scents

- arom — odor
- dulce — sweet
- fragrans — fragrant
- fragrantissima — very fragrant
- mosch — musk odor
- odorata — scented

Plant Shape

- arborescens — treelike
- elata — tall
- elegans — elegant, slender, willowy
- recta, erecta — upright, erect
- fruticosa — shrublike
- grand, grandi = big
- humilis — low-growing
- nana — dwarf, miniature
- pendula -drooping, pendulous
- prostrat, prostratum, procumbens — prostrate
- pumilia — low-growing, dwarf
- repens, reptans — creeping
- scandens — climbing

Origin of Species

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aethiopium — Africa • alpin — alpine regions • antill — West Indies • australis — southern • barbadensis — native to Barbados • borealis — northern • campestris — of the field or plains • canadensis — from Canada or America • canariensis — from the Canary Islands • capensis — from the Cape of Good Hope • chilensis — from Chile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chinensis — from China • europa — from Europe • insularis — of the island • japonica — japonicum — from Japan • littoralis — of the seashore • maritima — from near the sea • montana, montanus — from the mountains • palustris — from marshes or wetlands |
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