

# Identifying your garden preferences

A personal garden is only limited by the constraints of a person's imagination. The vast array of plants and flowers available from all over the world can turn anyone's yard into a melange of functional spaces.

When designing a garden, many homeowners do not know where to begin. Much like decorating the interior of a home, how a garden landscape is executed depends on various factors.

## Climate and conditions

The foremost consideration when planting a garden is the climate where the garden will be located. Planting items that are not conducive to growing in certain conditions can be counterintuitive and a waste of money and effort.

Prospective gardeners must become familiar with the hardiness zones of their region prior to making any plans. This will help you to determine which types of plants will thrive on your landscape. Once this is determined, examination of the soil and con-



ditions on the property is also helpful. Taking this step will help identify any plant deterrents, such as poor soil quality and pH as well as any pests that may impede plant growth.

## Style of the home

Landscaping designs often tie into the architectural style of a home. For example, an extensive Asian-inspired garden complete with koi pond and bonsai may look odd in front of a log home. Keep architecture in mind when planning a garden so the look of the home you present is cohesive and fits with the community and immediate vicinity.

## Design preferences

Are you a free spirit who doesn't conform to convention with firm boundaries? Or are you one who likes order and things in their place? Knowing what makes you tick will help you to choose a gardening style that will be easier to maintain

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If you live in a hot, sandy location, lush tropical plants may not thrive. Therefore, even if you desire a Mediterranean look, you may have to settle for something

and also make you feel comfortable. For example, prairie-style planting or wildflower gardens are dramatic ways to create natural points of color over a large area. Most plants are allowed to grow as they may.

Those who like a dreamy ethereal feel to their gardens may be inspired by cottage designs, where generously filled borders overflow into a flower and foliage paradise.

If you are more inclined to follow the rules and like an orderly landscape, a parterre, or formal planting bed, may be

more your style. When carefully pruned, box hedging can show off symmetry and geometry in your space.

Some people are more focused on the accents in their gardens than the plants themselves. Modern architecture pairs well with a contemporary style that blends minimalist accents and easy-to-maintain plants.

Although you can change plants in your garden, investing in a garden that you will be happy with for a long time is a costly venture. You may want to consult a landscape architect or

local nursery to find the plants and trees that fit with your design and lifestyle. These experts can also instruct you in how to maintain all of your hard work and when to expect the full impact of your new landscape to take form.

Homeowners can browse ideas for gardens in magazines and online, but ultimately it will be up to their personal design preferences and the climate where their home is located to determine which garden will look and grow best.

# Spring Garden Time

Few things are anticipated more in spring than the arrival of new leaves on the trees and budding flowers in the garden. A landscape awash with fresh colors can brighten the spirit and make anyone want to head outdoors.

There are many different plants that begin to show their colors in the spring. A number of perennials, annuals and trees begin to flower or show new sprouts come the springtime. Here are some plants that can be planted for springtime enjoyment.



## Annuals

Looking for first signs of color? Look no further than these wonderful annuals.

**\*Alyssum:** Starting in April, this cascading bounty of tiny flowers offers a sweet aroma that attracts butterflies.

**\*Dianthus:** These vivid flowers also attract butterflies and are often a cottage garden staple.

**\*Gypsophila:** Also known as baby's breath, these delicate flowers can serve as filler in any landscape. Pink and white varieties are available.

**\*Impatiens:** One of the best-known plants for the garden, these annuals come in scores of colors and can generally tolerate full sun to full shade.

**\*Larkspur:** Belonging to the buttercup family, these flowers bloom in shades of white to violet.

**\*Pansy:** These flowers are some of the earliest spring bloomers, arriving alongside spring bulbs like tulips.

**\*Petunias:** Petunias put on a show of color through the entire season, making them a popular bedding flower.

## Perennials

These plants will come back year after year and offer spring shows.

**\*Cherry blossom:** The flowers that sprout on cherry trees are some of the first signs of spring. Their pink or white buds are often a spectacle, so much so that towns and cities hold cherry blossom festivals.

**\*Columbine:** These beautiful blooms attract butterflies and can be a nice part of a garden bed.

**\*Jacob's ladder:** Variegated foliage that is dappled with violet-colored flowers can add a sweet smell and visual interest to the garden.

**\*Primrose:** These flowers come in a variety of shades, making them versatile in any garden.

They also tend to attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

**\*Sweet violet:** These fragrant flowers are edible as well as attractive. These plants can self-plant, so unless a gardener wants them to spread, they should be kept contained.

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