

## CREATING THE MOOD

### **Aim**

Develop an understanding and appreciation of the use of; colour, light, shade, temperature, water, foliage and other elements, in establishing the mood of a garden.

There are many elements that contribute to the ambience or mood of a garden. Colour is perhaps most significant, however the choice of plants, the quantity of plants (or no plants), the permanent structures and ornamentation are also important.

### **Active vs. Passive**

A garden with a barbecue area, a sandpit, a swing, a pool and a child's play house would be seen as being 'active'. It is clear that the garden is more utilitarian. Conversely, a garden with a bench beneath some shade trees, a pond, a sculpture, an herbaceous border and some specimen trees would create an ambience of tranquillity. It is more likely that the owners would spend time resting in the garden and admiring it. It would be considered 'passive'.



Passive Garden



Active Garden

### **Simple vs. Complex**

A complex garden will clearly have lots of intricate areas created through using many different plant species. It may have a number of paths that lead to different areas of the garden. These areas may pertain to a number of different themes. There could be a number of different focal points. It could be planted so that different plants look their best at different times of the year, so as to maintain year round interest. Such a garden may have a number of effects on ambience. It may be quite stimulating for the onlooker encouraging them to look further and more deeply into the garden. It may activate their imagination and inspire them toward their own gardening aspirations. If the garden is extremely complex, however, it may also serve to overwhelm some individuals who would prefer something a little less complex so as to be able to relax.

On the other hand, a simple garden may have few plants, perhaps a large lawn area or paved area and little in the way of features. Such a garden would be more likely to evoke a feeling of relaxation and perhaps permit the onlooker to focus on their own thoughts. If the garden is too simple, however, it may make the onlooker feel disinterested or bored in the garden and it will therefore fail to attract people into it.

### **Movement vs. Static**

Movement in the garden can be created in a number of ways. It can come about through the natural movement of trees and shrubs in the wind, through mobiles or through water fountains. It gives an air of vitality and of life. The associated sounds reiterate this sense of living; the rustle of the leaves in the trees, the splash of the water. On the contrary, a garden that has little movement may seem rather dull and lifeless.

### **Light vs. Shade**

The amount of light in the garden has quite a profound effect on mood. A garden that has much light could be associated with feelings of openness, joy, elation and optimism. A garden that has much shade would create feelings of enclosure, frustration, and gloom.

## **Managing Light & Shade**

The amount of light you receive in your garden and home will depend greatly on the design of both, as well as the relationship between them. We all realise, for example, that a house with lots of windows will allow plenty of light indoors, but what happens if we plant tall dense canopy trees all around the house...the light doesn't get past the trees. Likewise, the walls of houses, garages and sheds can block light to parts of your garden, creating shaded areas.

The challenge for most gardeners is to ensure that their garden receives plenty of light in those areas where they want it, while providing shade to those parts of the garden that may get too much light, or get very hot. Good garden design and plant selection can help achieve this, and at the same time create a garden that makes the most of the different light conditions available.

## **Increasing Light to Your Garden**

Common methods include the removing adjacent pergolas, roofing over verandas that cause excessive shade, or the replacement of panels from metal rooved verandas, garages or sheds (e.g. galvanised iron) and replacing them with a transparent roofing material such as polycarbonate sheets.

If you do have shaded areas in your garden you have two main options, either reduce the amount of shade, or use it. Reducing the amount of shade is often difficult, particularly if it is being created by large, permanent structures such as walls, fences or large trees. Sometimes selective removal of some plants may significantly open up a garden allowing more light to penetrate. The second option of using the shade is often far easier and with careful plant selection can be very rewarding.

Removal of plants that provide shade can result in dramatic changes to the amount of light received through windows, but be careful that you don't go from one extreme to the other, and suddenly have too much light and heat entering the garden. If there are a number of plants you wish to remove, try it in stages removing one or two plants at a time to see what results you get. It is much easier (& cheaper) to take out an extra plant or two later than it is to have to provide some means of re-establishing shade to your garden.

## **Reducing the Amount of Light Received**

Sometimes a garden receives too much light and it may be necessary to create shaded conditions.

An obvious method is to construct a pergola or similar structure adjacent to your home. The pergola can be rooved with materials that restrict light such as coloured polycarbonate sheeting, or shade cloth, or plants can be grown over it, providing cool, living shade, that allows breezes to penetrate freely. Temporary shade can be provided by the use of shade wings or umbrellas which can be removed or lowered as required.

Plants can also be used to provide shade to parts of the garden that receive excessive light, or get very hot, such as facing the hot afternoon sun in summer. Choose your plants carefully – often lightly or open foliaged plants are best. Dense foliaged plants may cut out too much light. Deciduous plants can be utilised to provide summer shade, while letting through plenty of light during winter.

Placement of your plants is also very important. Look for the parts of your garden, and the times of the day, that receive the most light. Place your plants to block out the worst of the sunlight. Make sure, however, that you consider changes that will occur as the plants grow. They may provide suitable protection when young, but as they grow larger begin to block out too much light. Understanding how big the plants you choose will grow, and how quickly they grow is very important.

## **Working with Shade**

Shade can be seen as both positive and negative (depending on your perspective).

### **Positive**

It stops glare  
It keeps the environment cooler  
It conserves water around plant roots  
It can protect you from wind  
It provides protection against skin cancer  
It may provide frost protection  
Some plants thrive in shaded conditions

### **Negative**

It makes things hard to see (e.g. if you are reading)  
It keeps a garden moist (slime/algae can grow)  
It makes a building moist (mould can grow)  
It often reduces ventilation, which may encourage plant diseases  
Many plants will struggle, or may not flower well in shaded conditions

### **Examples of Plants which Thrive in Shaded Conditions**

Clivia miniata  
Camellias  
Aucuba japonica cultivars  
Rhododendron cultivars (including azaleas)  
Ferns (of many different shapes, sizes and appearance)  
Aspidistra elatior  
Boronia species (need good drainage)  
Daphne odora  
Dichondra repens  
Hydrangea macrophylla cultivars  
Palms (many species)  
Pieris japonica (Andromeda)  
Plectranthus oertendahlii, P. eckloni  
Viola betonicifolia, V. hederacea, V. odorata

### **Garden Lighting**

The addition of lights to a garden can create a whole new feel to your garden at night. Dark, hidden or forbidding spots can be turned into delightful new features.

Lighting can be permanent (fixed in position) or temporary. Portable lighting can be moved as desired. Both 240 volt systems plugged directly into power points, or low voltage systems (e.g. 24 volt ) are readily available.

Permanent lighting is most often used for entertainment areas such as back patios, verandas or decking. These systems are generally permanently wired into the homes mains system (240 volt) and needs to be undertaken by a qualified tradesperson. While the location of the lights is fixed, it is usually possible (depending upon the type of light fitting) to adjust the angle of the light beam. The types of lights can also vary considerably, including flood-lights for broad area illumination, spots to illuminate specific areas, and florescent tubes for diffuse lighting.

Some lights can be switched on to provide light when entertaining, and can also be set to turn on when movement is sensed to provide security. Others provide light when someone moves into the range of the light's sensor.

Low voltage units are commonly used in garden areas. These are usually 12 or 24 volt systems for safety purposes. They usually plug into a transformer that is plugged into a mains (240volt) system. These low voltage systems are designed to be weatherproof. The lights will often be mounted on a spike that can be pushed into the ground to anchor the light. They can also be mounted on walls, trees or even draped amongst plants.

Care should be taken to ensure that the low voltage cables are not damaged during gardening, chewed up by pets, or played with by children. It is a good idea where possible, when these lights are placed in a permanent or semi-permanent position to bury the cables. Ideally they should be protected, when buried, by plastic electrical conduit, or as a cheaper alternative (but not as strong) by black 19mm irrigation poly pipe. Most garden cables are now armour plated.

Alternatively run the cables along the back of sleeper or stonework walls so they have some protection.

Garden lights are commonly used to illuminate water features, to spot light sculptures or feature plants, to show the way along pathways or drives, to provide broader illumination of garden beds, flowers displays, to create displays amongst the foliage of trees and large shrubs (as with Christmas lights), and to provide light in structures such as pergolas or gazebos. The possibilities are just about endless.

### **Other Factors Affecting Mood**

As well as the compositional elements, mood may be affected through the garden theme. A Japanese or Chinese garden may conjure up thoughts and feelings associated with the orient. A rigidly formal garden may evoke austerity, power and respect. A modern garden could trigger feelings of youth, vitality and chic.

The general state of the garden also plays an important role in the effect that it has on mood. For example, a well-maintained garden gives the impression of orderliness, attention and care. An overgrown garden with dilapidated structures, broken pots and pavers and so on, gives the feeling of neglect, decay and at worst, death (compare this too with the associations with history, battles and bygone times that are conjured up through the careful placing of cracked pillars, aged vases and other historical structures).

Humour can be injected into the garden using such things as ornaments (anything from gnomes to manikins, toy cars to bizarre sculptures), planting up amusing containers such as a car tyre or old toilet, installing unusually twisted foliage or trees with funny shaped trunks, or perhaps even pruning a box tree into the shape of a helicopter or elephant.

Mystery can be achieved through concealed entrances, covered walkways, peepholes, murals separate 'garden rooms'.

There are indeed numerous ways in which a myriad of moods can be instigated and the personality of the owner reflected in the garden.



Modern

Humorous

Oriental

### **WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A GARDEN**

Gardens come in all shapes, sizes and types. The right one for you is determined by what type of mood you really want to create, the area you are working with (natural features), how you plan to use the garden, if at all, and the resources (e.g. money, tools, labour) you have to develop and maintain the garden.

Once you know what your priorities are, you can then start to develop a garden which meets your requirements. Meeting all of your desired needs may not always be possible. However, with further consideration, most priorities can be fulfilled. Understanding the design concepts attached to your desired garden will influence the final design. These design concepts include:

- As a Stress Release

You might develop a garden to just be in; and to take in the tranquillity and peace

This sort of feeling is created by curved lines, soft forms, weeping foliage and water; among other things. The atmosphere needs to be natural, so man made sights such as buildings, roads and power lines may be better screened by large plants. Views over the sea, farm or bushland however enhance the tranquillity of a garden, and should be left unobscured.

- To Create a Mood

You can design your garden to enhance any mood you desire. The garden can completely change the mood of a house, making a house seem more or less formal, warmer or colder, even larger or smaller. A garden for example, might be made more welcoming, encouraging people to enter, or alternatively it may discourage visitors.

- For Children to Play In

Young children (perhaps to the age of 5 years), need a wide range of sensory experiences, so the garden needs to have as many different types of surfaces and materials as possible (eg. hard, soft, rough, smooth, flat, sloping etc). For older children, play is a more social or interactive thing, so the garden needs to offer places for them to interact in different ways with friends, relatives and even pets. Gardens need to be secure (i.e. fenced) for very young children. They should have places where kids can be creative, digging in soil or sand, making cubbies or building other things. Swings and other playground equipment are useful but there is a lot more to play than playground equipment. Open areas of lawn are particularly important, as are hard surfaces which balls can be bounced on.

- Recreation for Adults and Older Children

Swimming pools and spas need to be located in clean and safe areas. Dust, soil, leaves or lawn clippings are not welcome in the water, whether carried in on feet or the wind. Rough or slippery surfaces around the water are undesirable. Swimming pools can have holes built into the surrounds to take beach or market umbrellas, large trees or palms can be planted thoughtfully (not too close so that they drop leaves, twigs, etc. into the water) to provide shade, and if desirable, shade-cloth or some other structure can be erected to provide protection from the sun (and perhaps help keep rubbish out of the water).

Adults may decide they want areas for other hobbies or sports. Some people use the garden for a hobby such as model railways, model planes or restoring old cars. Others put golf holes in the lawn to practice their putting, or a basketball hoop beside the driveway. A bare piece of lawn or paving could be the practice area for Tai Chi or other forms of relaxation and martial arts.

- Entertainment Areas

This is usually a back veranda, patio or poolside area with or without a bar-be-que and outdoor furniture. These areas are generally located near to the house with good access to the kitchen. They can be completely open, partially enclosed, or even completely roofed over.

- To Grow Food (fruit, vegies, poultry etc)

Vegetables can be easily grown in raised soil beds, in pots, hydroponics or in no-dig beds (i.e. layers of straw and compost). They can be small or large areas, but either way, they are best located where there is plenty of light, protection from winds, near a source of water (e.g. tap), can be readily accessed from the kitchen and also ideally the tool shed, and are protected from marauding children and animals.

Fruit trees can take up a little or a lot of space. If space is limited, you can grow fruit trees as espaliers on a wall or fence (i.e. trained like a climber), use dwarf varieties or grow them in large pots to restrict their size.

- To Grow Flowers or Colourful Foliage

Colourful gardens are bright, happy and lively places. They can provide a real uplift to your wellbeing when you feel down, and they can provide something you can cut and bring inside to brighten up the house. If you want flowers all year round, you need to choose the plants you grow carefully. Annual flowers, bulbs and perennials generally form the backbone of a flower garden, being chosen carefully to ensure the presence of some flowers every week of the year. Some shrubs and perennials flower for very long periods of time, in some climates. These can be a great way to keep colour in the garden. Some roses, for instance flower for months on end, but even these in ideal conditions will have periods without flowers and that is when to plan to have something else near to or amongst the roses in flower. Colourful foliage can likewise be very attractive, and can provide year found colour, whether they are in flower or not. You might decide to choose a particular colour theme, such as blue-grey foliage and white flowers, or you might decide to create a riot of colour.

- To Make the Home (inside & out) Cooler

Shade trees, pergolas and anything else adjacent to your house which provides shade will help reduce heat indoors. Hot brick walls can be kept cool by growing a creeper (but inspect it annually to ensure it isn't damaging the building). Lawn or shrubs around the outside walls will also keep the building cooler. In some areas, cooling winds are common at certain times. Be sure not to block off such winds with plantings or garden structures (e.g. fences). Areas of water, particularly if it splashes (eg. a large fountain or waterfall), can have a significant cooling affect on a hot day.

- Provide a Buffer From the Outside World (visual and sound)

Plantings or fences can be used to simply block unpleasant views. Noise is more difficult to block. Some types of fences can help, and building mounds can also reduce noise; however noise, unlike line of sight, moves round corners. A row of bushes often does little to reduce noise. If you want an effective noise barrier, it may be expensive, and you may need an engineer to advise you.

- Provide Storage Space

People store all sorts of things in their gardens, from old vehicles, boats and trailers to firewood, building materials, scrap metal and piles of soil. Some people only need small areas for storage, but others may need to use half or more of their property. Place storage areas carefully to ensure that they are secure (from the weather, children, pests and thieves), easily accessed, and are not intrusive visually or physically (placed in an area where they will cause minimal interference with other activities). Safety is another important aspect. Firewood and other flammable materials should not be placed too near buildings (especially in bushfire prone areas), or BBQs, or incinerators, or work areas where activities such as welding may be carried out.

- Increase Property Values

A well kept garden can both increase the saleability and the value of a property. Excessive spending on a garden however might not be recovered when the property sells. If your main concern is property values, then keep the garden design simple, easy to look after, and neat and attractive.

- To House a Collection of Plants

For a plant enthusiast, the garden is a place to assemble and grow their prized collection of plants. For some people it may be orchids or ferns, and for others it might be gingers or cacti. The type of plants collected will determine the way the garden is developed, and what types of protective structures (e.g. greenhouses & shade houses) may be required.

- Somewhere to Work

As with recreation and storage, some people require a work space within the garden. Ease of access to the area, access to tools and storage space, protection from the weather, creating a pleasant or private environment, and the work space's affect and influence on the rest of the property are all important considerations when planning for a useable work area.

- To Provide Service Areas

For most people somewhere to hang your washing outside to dry and air is important. Areas to place garbage bins and compost bins may also be required. Good access from the house is required for such areas. They should ideally be placed to be as hidden as much as possible from other parts of your property (not visually intrusive). A separate service area or areas can be created simply using fencing, or screening plants. Paving such areas is also common to provide easily cleaned, all weather access. Be sure though, for washing lines, to provide a site with plenty of sunlight, and sufficient air movement (e.g. light winds) to ensure your washed materials are adequately dried.

- To Keep People or Animals Off Your Property

This can be done with either fences, hedges, rows of prickly plants or even ponds or lakes. Some properties use a combination of these things.

- To Keep Fit By Gardening

Some people enjoy gardening. It's their hobby, and it's what keeps them fit. They might be retired, or they might just work in a job where they don't get a lot of other exercise, or they might just enjoy creating things and growing plants themselves. Such people often want a garden which gives them a chance to sweat and get their hands dirty.

Vegetable and flower gardens can be built which need regular weeding and replanting; plants which need routine pruning can be planted (eg. roses and fruit trees), and lots of pot plants and hanging baskets can be included in the garden. Large areas for mowing also provide a good opportunity for fitness, as long as a push mower is used. Be sure to provide sufficient opportunities for enjoyable labour, but not so much that it becomes onerous.

- **To Minimise Pest Problems Such As Snakes, Rodents, Ants or Cockroaches**

There is less likelihood of pest and disease problems if the property is kept clean and neat. Avoid leaving food scraps, empty drink or food containers, etc. lying around outside.

Keep rubbish bins sealed. Locate compost heaps away from the house or outdoor living areas. Wood shavings (not sawdust) can help discourage snakes, which can find the shavings rough to crawl over. Sweet things (eg. sugar cane mulch, sap sucking insects such as scale or aphid) attract ants, so avoid or control these things. Many pests are encouraged by certain plants and discouraged by others. For example, cockroaches are less likely if you have self-cleaning palms (which drop old fronds). Ants are more likely if you have Citrus, Hibiscus, Acalypha, and Dodonaea. Rodents and ants are discouraged by planting mints, particularly pennyroyal and peppermint.

### **Personality and the Garden**

Gardens tend to reflect the personality of the people who create them. Informal people tend to create informal gardens, and formal people tend to create very ordered, neat gardens. This might give us some guide as to how to choose a landscaper to create a garden, or the most suitable approach to be considered when creating your own design.

To plan a good garden requires the right frame of mind. If you approach the garden as a chore, that will be reflected in the design. Gardens which impress are ones designed with a little flair, and perhaps the application of some lateral thinking. Don't be restricted to duplicating what everyone else has. Borrow ideas from other gardens that you really like, but ultimately, be sure your garden suits you. It is your chance to stamp your home environment with your own personal character.

### **KEEPING IT IN SCALE**

Small plants, statues or other features can look great in a small garden.

Things that are often lost, or go unnoticed in a large landscape, are always going to be more visible in a smaller space.

Gardens should always be designed with an appreciation of scale.

#### **What is Scale**

Scale is about how the different elements of the landscape relate to the depth of the view. The further you can see, the larger the scale. If your garden is only a few metres across it will have a much smaller scale than a garden with an unrestricted view of the sky and the horizon.

#### *Techniques for Keeping in Scale*

- Never have walls that are taller than the width of the garden
- Oversized trees in a tiny courtyard will not only cause structural damage; they just won't look right.
- Don't include too many plants; the 'clutter' will make the garden seem smaller.
- Use dwarf varieties of plants. They are less likely to become overgrown and compete for precious space.
- Keep it modest when choosing garden furniture. Have enough seating and table space for your needs, but have them small enough to allow you to move freely around the garden.
- Use small paving stones to create the illusion that the garden is larger.
- The width of steps and paths must be in proportion with the size of the garden.

#### **Garden Features for Small Gardens**

In a small garden any feature will be more visible than in a larger space. Therefore, they have to be carefully chosen. In most cases they should be kept small to keep in scale with the rest of the landscape.

## Framing the View

Because scale is determined by how far you can see, it can be manipulated by the way you frame the view. For example, you can shape the view from your kitchen window by adding a pergola with a climbing plant. As you look through the window, the garden beyond the pergola will appear to be further in the distance.

## COLOUR AND THE GARDEN

If you want a garden to look great, you need a theme to build around – something that most of the plants and features have in common. The shared characteristic will tie the different parts of the garden together and create a sense of order and harmony. Colour can be used to unify your garden, giving it a style and impact.

The importance of colour is much more widely recognised today than it was in the past. Some of the best gardens in the world are in fact ones that are developed around a colour theme. Any garden will of course contain green foliage, but beyond that it can have any of a whole range of colours in the foliage, flowers and fruits. In addition, paving, walls, buildings, furniture, statues and other garden features can all bring different colours into the garden.

There are colours that work well by themselves and some that work well with others. Good use of colour can make a garden design a real success. Incorrect use of colour can cause the reverse. Colour in the garden is not just from flowers and foliage - although they are probably the most obvious. Just as important are the interactions of other elements in the garden.

Items in the garden that provide colour:

plant foliage	rocks, stones	driveways
plant flowers	gravel	retaining walls
plant trunks	pavers	mulch
plant fruits	concrete	animals
house timber	fences	water (particularly with reflections)
bricks	shade cloth	
garden furniture	pots	
garden statuary	shade awnings	

## USING PLANTS FOR COLOUR

A garden is full of colour- but behind all the flowers and fruit, there is a base colour of green. The green generated by the leaves provides a background harmonising effect to the overall design.

If you look carefully at plants you will notice an array of green tones in every garden – dark, light, greys, blues, yellows, etc. These can offer significant variation to satisfy many garden designs such as blue-green or grey-green theme gardens.

When designing with strong colours based on leaves or flowers, it is best to plant together those plants whose colours are next to each other in the light spectrum (just think of a rainbow), or use their complimentary or opposite colours. Examples: violet flowers can be used with yellow (its opposite colour.); and blue and green could be planted together.

A very popular practice in gardens is using two contrasting colours for hedging. For example a small hedge made up of *Alternanthera dentata* (deep dark red foliage) combined with a tall hedge of *Duranta* 'Sheena's Gold' (with yellow green foliage). This striking feature is used along pathways, to highlight garden beds, and to attract attention to buildings.

## USING COLOURED POTS

Coloured pots should be used with care. If the main object is to highlight the plant's shape and form, then the colour of the pot should be subtle. If the flower colour is stunning, then it is best to select a contrasting pot colour (eg. Use a blue pot with a yellow flowering Chrysanthemum). Be careful not to wash out the attractiveness of the flowers by selecting a competing pot colour (e.g. Yellow flowers with a gold pot). The natural, earthy tones of terracotta are very popular for good reason. These colours are subtle and not too overpowering.

## **USE OF COLOURED STATUARY**

Statues are very popular in some styles of gardens. The decision to include a statue should be based on the image you are trying to portray, it's size, it's suitability to the garden theme and it's colour.

### **Stone, Reconstituted Stone, Plaster, Clay and Cement Statuary**

These types of statuary tend to come in the following main tones –

- Terracotta - two shades are commonly available: old style and a new tone called 'Tuscan Terracotta' which is more tan and subtler than the original tone.
- Tuscan Yellow – this is a soft yellow which is very good for Mediterranean gardens. It blends well with either original tone terracotta or 'Tuscan Terracotta'.
- White wash – this is a technique where a colour is applied over a statue to emphasize the detail and definition. The busier the piece (the more nooks and crannies), the more colour will be displayed. Coloured washes include:
  - green –this gives a weathered look
  - golden sand - gives a creamy appearance
  - stone – provides the old grey look
  - sepia – offers a reddish-brown tone for the definition.

The final colour of statue that you select should be one based on personal preference and suitability to the garden design and style.

### **Bronze, Iron and Other Metal Statuary**

Natural finished metals tend to be dark in tone, although some modern features come in silver metal finishes.

Verdigris (greenish or bluish patina) tends to build up on the surface of bronze, brass and copper which will render it inconspicuous against a background of green foliage.

Darker metals can be highlighted by placing them in front of a pale backdrop such as a whitewashed wall or grey stone, however, consideration needs to be given to background colours when using painted metals.

As a general rule of thumb you can use the sky as a backdrop for darker statuary, whereas paler statuary needs a darker background.

## **THE IMPACT OF HOUSE COLOUR ON THE GARDEN**

The colour of a home and other structures can usually make or break a garden design. A good garden design will aim to utilise the colours of houses and other structures to create colour schemes in the garden.

For most properties, the situation will be one where the house is already built and coloured due to personal preferences for that colour/s. In this case a designer will then need to create a garden that compliments the home, using plants and other landscape items such as paving, driveways, gates, & pots that suit/complement the colours of their home.

In some cases landscape architects have looked at the site before building construction, and the colours used for the house have been chosen to compliment the surrounding land colours, and other adjacent homes and gardens.

## **OTHER COLOURED SURFACES**

When using light coloured, ground covering materials (such as paving, concrete, or stones) you should be aware of the light reflection and heat generated in the area. If used in conjunction with very light or white walls of the home, this area may look sterile and uninviting. If used with contrasting dark walls a contrast is created.

Black and white combinations are popular with many modern homes – black stones or mondo grass between light large pavers or stones are very striking for a courtyard or display garden. A pathway made of randomly placed black and white pavers may not look very appealing, but a random arrangement of two or three earth tones of brown would look perfect for a native style garden.

The use of bitumen/asphalt on properties is often regarded poorly. Not because of poor design, but because it hasn't been used to its best advantage. With the range of new colours now available it can be a cheap alternative to pavers and concrete for driveways, footpaths and entertainment areas. The colours may also be used to compliment the overall design.

### **COLOURED SHADE-CLOTH, PLASTICS & SHADEWINGS**

Shade cloth is a popular cover for shade-houses & pergolas. It is available in a variety of colours and patterns that can be used to complement the colours of a house and garden, or to create a deliberate contrast. Shade cloth is available in a range of shade 'strengths', with cloth that provides 50%, 70% & 90% shade being common. The strength chosen will also have an effect on the strength of colours that appear beneath the shade-cloth.

Some gardens use plastic sheeting. Clear or translucent is the best for most plants, however, coloured plastics are sometimes used. These coloured plastics filter the light as it passes through and cast a coloured light which can alter plant growth. Even though many people prefer to use green coloured plastic, this is not the best colour for plants.

Shade wings, umbrellas, and similar products are available in a huge range of colours. They can be chosen to complement, or 'fit in' with the garden, or by selecting contrasting colours, produce an eye catching feature. They can be fixed permanently in position, or can be temporary items, only used as the weather dictates.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT COLOURS**

Different colours create different emotional responses that can be harnessed by the landscape designer to set a garden mood. The following table describes the typical psychological effects of different colours.

<b>Colour</b>	<b>Positive Force</b>	<b>Negative Force</b>
Red	strength and vitality and warmth	stress, nervous, impulsive
Pink	love, compassion caring	immature
Orange	inspiration, awareness, wisdom,	fear
Gold	wisdom, joy, happiness, rapture	anxiety, fear, frustration
Yellow	knowledge, joy, happiness	anxiety, jealousy, suspicion, nervousness
Green	harmony, balance, knowledge, nature	lacking direction, envy, jealousy, deceit
Turquoise	artistic abilities,	lack of communication and independence
Blue	peace, nurturing, rationality	depression, lack of peace
Indigo	spirituality, sincerity	isolation, separation, self-deception

### **WATER AND COLOUR IN THE GARDEN**

The creative use of water in the garden can produce a myriad of effects relating to colour. Moving water will catch the sunlight, reflecting it in all directions in an ever changing effect. Still water creates the ideal situation for reflecting the colours of items around it. These reflections will also change as the position of the sun changes through the day. Interesting colour effects can also be created by the placement of different coloured items into a water feature. A good example is the use of rocks in the bottom of a shallow pond that might appear dull when dry, but come alive with multiple colours when wet.

## **RULES FOR USING COLOUR IN GARDENS**

- Most components of a garden should have complementary colours. An occasional contrasting colour though, can be used to highlight a feature (eg. a statue in a contrasting colour will stand out and be readily noticed from a distance).
- Limit the range of colours used in a garden. The more colours used, the busier the garden will seem.
- Choose colours that complement the desired garden style, eg. terracotta in a Mediterranean garden.
- Choose colours that fit the garden's purpose. For example, choose soft shades in areas used for relaxation; choose vibrant colours in parts of the garden used for more active pursuits.
- Consider colour changes throughout the year. Flowers, berries, autumn foliage, even bark colour can change and create different effects at different times.

## **HOT AND COLD COLOURS IN THE GARDEN**

Hot colours are those like red, yellow, orange. During cool seasons, the use of these colours will give a feeling of warmth and hope. In summer, excessive use may give the feelings of stifling heat and may deter people from enjoying the garden as it may feel too hot. Hot coloured items tend to appear closer than they actually are. In small gardens, excessive use of these colours will make the garden feel smaller. In large gardens, use of these colours can encourage people to walk to various areas in the garden as it 'does not appear to be very far away'.



Cool colours are those like green, blue, white and occasionally pale tones of other colours. In cool districts, excessive use of these colours in winter may make your garden feel 'too cold'. In warm seasons or districts, use of these colours will help to 'cool' the garden down to make it more enjoyable. Cool colours tend to recede away from the view of observers. For small gardens these colours should be used to give the impression that the garden is actually larger than what it really is. In large gardens, these colours will help to make the garden seem even larger.

## **USING HOT COLOURED PLANTS**

Hot coloured plants can be used:

- to evoke a tropical 'summery' feel in the garden
- to liven up dull areas
- to brighten up dark, shady areas
- to make large garden areas seem smaller and more intimate.

Generally it's a good idea to use plants with hot colours as dramatic highlights, rather than solid blocks of strong colours, eg. occasional splashes of reds, yellow or pinks will really stand out and look effective, whereas dense plantings of those colours can be overwhelming and gaudy.

Depending on the look you want to achieve, it's also best to choose colours that harmonise together.

For example, different shades of reds, yellows and oranges work well together; pinks, purples and reds will also look good; but other combinations, such as pink and orange planted together, can create a clash of colours.

The interaction between light and colour is important in choosing colour combinations. You can get away with planting lots of bright competing colours in a tropical garden because the intense hues are offset by the dark glossy foliage. In a herbaceous border in a cooler climate, those same strong colours planted together can look overwhelming because the light is softer and the background foliage is generally sparser and lighter in colour.

Generally, strong colours will stand out better if set against a bland background, such as a wall, or amongst plants with dark glossy or matt green foliage.

Plants with colourful fruits (e.g. pomegranates and persimmons) bark (e.g. *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki' – bright red stems in winter) and deciduous leaves (eg. Boston ivy, Japanese maples) can provide strong coloured accents at certain times of the year.

### **OTHER SOURCES OF HOT GARDEN COLOURS**

Plants are just one way to introduce bold hot colours in the garden. Furnishings, paving and garden accessories with similar warm tones will help to tie the colours together. For example:

- Red brick paving
- Rich stained reddish timber
- Terracotta and coloured plastic pots
- Vibrant coloured sculpture and mosaics
- Yellow or orange furniture
- Rendered terracotta or sandstone-coloured walls
- Ochre coloured gravel and pebbles

### **COOL GARDENS**

A cool, sheltered garden is ideal for relaxing in the shade with a cool drink on a hot summer afternoon, or for entertaining on a balmy evening. However, a badly designed garden can become very hot and uncomfortable.

The trend towards smaller, low maintenance backyards means that the summers can seem even hotter and longer than they used to. We have fewer large shade trees, we've replaced lawns with low maintenance paving, and enclosed entertaining areas with small designer-style walled courtyards. There is a need to design gardens that become cool sanctuaries.

### **REASONS GARDENS BECOME TOO HOT**

- Too much open exposed areas of paving increasing temperatures from absorbed and reflected heat.
- Not enough shade.
- Blocking off the breeze - this is a common problem in small walled courtyards.
- Dark surfaces which absorb and retain heat.
- Lightly coloured walls that reflect light and heat.
- Metal furniture in full sun.
- An outdoor living area downwind of the barbecue.

### **MAKING THE GARDEN COOLER**

Depending on the size of the garden and the available budget, some of the choices are:

- Temporary shade. The simplest way to create a shaded area is to put up a large umbrella. A cabana – an open-sided tent – is useful for temporarily shading a small area of lawn, sandpit or wading pool.
- One or more shade wings can be erected to shelter larger areas, such as verandas, barbecue areas, children's play areas.

These might be attached permanently in position, or only temporarily during the warmer months, and then removed during cooler seasons to allow more light and warmth to penetrate into the garden. Depending on your preferences you can choose coloured shade wings that merge into the garden so that they are not so obvious, or you might choose bright-coloured ones to make a statement, or to create a focal point.

- Other permanent shade structures include arbours (small pergola-like structure framing a seat), pergolas and gazebos. Think carefully about the style of the house and garden before including a permanent shade structure, because they will have a significant visual impact on the garden.
- Trees, climbers and shrubs. All gardens benefit from the inclusion of plants, especially when they're placed along the western boundary to cast shade in the afternoon. In a small garden, consider using tall, narrow plants such as Pencil Pine (*Cupressus sempervirens*). Large potted plants can be used to filter wind and to cast some shade in courtyards and around swimming pools. These can be moved around if desired as the seasons change.
- Lattice screens. These can be used instead of solid walls that block off breezes in the garden. Climbing plants grown up the screen will give more shade and privacy.
- Water. You don't need a full size swimming pool to enjoy the cooling effect of water. A lap pool takes up considerably less space (about 16m x 5m), while a plunge pool can be fitted into most small gardens. Even a small water feature, such as a fountain, water barrel or pond, will make the garden feel cooler.

#### **PROBLEM**

Paving gets too much sun

#### **SOLUTION**

Put up a shade wing.  
Put out lots of large potted plants.  
Plant small trees around the courtyard or garden.

Garden furniture gets too hot

Put up a large market umbrella.  
Use vinyl or cloth cushions on chairs.

Play area gets too much sun

Put a cabana (open-sided tent) or a pergola (for more permanent shelter).

Lawn does not get enough sun

Carefully prune overhanging trees.  
Change turf variety for a shade loving type.

Hot and stuffy

Encourage air flow by fencing with an open material. e.g. picket fence with gaps; or rendered concrete walls with 'gaps' made in the wall.

Too much glare

Repaint walls.  
Provide shade structures.  
Position more potted plants in paved areas.

#### **USING BLUE IN THE GARDEN**

Blue is not a common colour in the garden. Sure we have all seen blue flowers, but when you stop and think about it, most flowers are shades of yellow, red, white or any colour other than blue, and often those flowers that are called blue are not really blue. For example, the Blue Moon Rose is lilac coloured, while the Rhododendron Blue Bell has a purple flower with a white and yellow throat.

It is even more difficult to find plant foliage that approaches blue in colour. Some Hostas have bluish foliage, the Blue Fescue has silvery blue leaves, there are also blue-toned conifers, but there aren't many other blue-foliaged plants.

Because it is so uncommon, blue can be used to create a different and unusual effect in a garden.

If you choose to focus on and strive for a predominance of blue colours, you will create a garden that is truly unique. Blue colours are cool colours, and a garden that follows this type of colour scheme will be a wonderfully welcome place to relax during hot summer days.

The comparative scarcity of blue flowers means that you may have to compromise – perhaps using purple and mauve coloured flowers and grey foliage to complement the stronger blue shades. If you can't find enough plants with bluish foliage to suit your planting scheme (and there aren't many!), choose ones that have darker green or grey foliage in preference to the very light vibrant greens.

The choice of plant colours will also depend on your overall garden theme. For a romantic, cottage-style garden, you could try using the softer, silvery-blue or grey-blue shades; the more intense blues are suited to Mediterranean and Santa Fe style gardens.

As well as using plants with blue flowers and foliage, try to pick up the blue tones in statues, stones, paving, walls and fences. Furniture and garden accessories can also be painted various shades of blue to complement the garden. And if you're still looking for ways to feature blue colours, mosaics are an excellent way of bringing a whole range of blue shades into the garden.

To complement your blue theme, as well as giving the garden a really cool summery feel, you could make a feature of clear blue water. You don't need a swimming pool – a blue tiled pond or painted water bowl is sufficient.

Without making the garden too sunny and hot, try to bring at least some of the sky into view in the garden. On a bright summer day, the combination of blue sky, water, plants and garden accessories can be quite stunning.

### **GARDEN DESIGN FOR WINTER WARMTH AND LIGHT**

- Create sun traps (stone, concrete, asphalt areas, etc). They will warm up faster than more shaded parts of the garden.
- Mulch and compost can insulate garden beds, and generate heat as it breaks down.
- Gullies and low spots can be significantly cooler longer, as cold air settles in such places. Plan winter garden areas in the higher parts of the garden.
- Too many plants will result in most, or all, of the garden being shaded. Open areas will let in sunlight more readily.
- Install outdoor lighting to brighten up your garden on dull days, and at night.
- Evergreen plants will block the winter sun from your house. Deciduous trees can be used as an alternative to provide summer shade, while letting in much more light during winter.
- Create windbreaks to filter prevailing winds, or to direct winds around areas that you want to protect.
- Bright coloured flowers, such as yellows, oranges and reds can create a feeling of warmth in your garden. Planting annuals flowers so that these coloured flowers are in bloom during the cooler months can really brighten up a garden.
- More modern pergolas are available with adjustable roofing that provides shade in summer while letting light through in winter.

### **SITE ANALYSIS**

The secret to good garden design is a plan.

When starting a design, first carefully examine the existing garden. Unless you have a brand new house on an undeveloped block, you will have to consider what is already on site. Things to look for include:

- Easements, caveats and utilities – are there legal restrictions on what you can do and where you can build? Look for gas, electricity, phone and water connections.
- Buildings and hard surfaces – are there sheds, paved areas, garden beds, etc?
- Topography and access – is there a slope or a change in levels? Can vehicles or pedestrians move freely?
- Orientation, seasonal issues – does the house shade parts of the garden? Do deciduous plants let in light during winter? Does one part of the house or garden get hot in summer? etc.

- Climate – where are the prevailing winds? When and how much does it rain? How often do you get frosts? etc.
- Soil, drainage – do you have clay or sandy soil? Are there wet spots in the garden?
- Atmosphere – is there any noise or air pollution?
- Vegetation – are there existing trees or shrubs you want to retain?
- Re-usable materials – are there any pavers, timber, etc. on site?
- Local area – what are the surrounding gardens like?
- Are there likely to be any future building works (extra rooms, new garage, etc.)?

### **DECIDING WHAT YOU WANT**

- What sort of atmosphere do you want to create?
- Privacy – do you want the garden for entertainment or for peace and quiet?
- Views, focal points – where are you going to look at the garden? (The most common view is usually from the kitchen window.) Is there a view you want to hide?
- Traffic – do you need room for cars? Will pedestrians trample the lawn?
- Children, pets – do you need room for ball games or for the dog to play?
- What sort of plants do you like?
- What sort of plants don't you like (eg. do you suffer from allergies or hay fever)?
- How much maintenance do you want to do?
- Do you want to include an irrigation system?
- Do you need a clothes line?
- Would you like an area to grow vegetables?
- Budget – how much do you want to spend?



### **Step by Step –Creating the Concept (Macro Design)**

Once you have made your site analysis and decided what you want, it will be much easier to develop your plan.

1. Take measurements of the garden. Include buildings, paths, important plants, etc.
2. Use graph paper to draw a plan of the existing garden features. Make a few copies so that you can try experimenting with different designs. On one copy, include the direction of the sun, the views from the house, and any other important information from your site analysis. This will help you see the limitations of the site.
3. Decide upon an overall design style or styles. It could be a cottage garden in the front and a native garden in the back. Alternatively, you could try an Oriental style garden in the front and a formal garden around the backyard swimming pool. The possibilities are endless. You have to decide what style of garden suits the house, the site conditions and your expectations.

4. Take a long look and try to visualise the garden in your mind. Where do the segments or rooms that make up the different garden areas belong? If there is a shaded area behind the house, this could be used for a fernery. If you want to grow vegetables or herbs, you will need a sunny position.
5. With a pencil and eraser use your graph paper to make drawings of possible garden designs. Don't be afraid to experiment. The idea is to see what will work and what is impractical.
6. Look at the drawings you have made and choose the best ideas. Combine these ideas into one final drawing.

### **Step By Step –How to Design a Garden Room** (Micro design)

Even if you only use one garden style, you will still have distinct areas within the garden. These "Garden Rooms" can have an ambience of their own.

First take measurements and make drawings as you did for your macro design. Then work out what components you need to realise your idea.

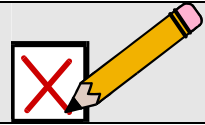
1. Structures and hard surfaces, eg. pergolas, decks, paving stones, railway sleepers, ponds, etc. These will decide the structure of the garden room. A formal garden will have geometric lines, whereas an informal garden might include an irregular or curved path. Consider views when deciding where to build. You don't want to see the back of the garden shed from the lounge room window!
2. Soil – does it need fertiliser, cultivation, etc?
3. Plants – will you need a creeper to cover the fence, or flowers for colour and scent, or trees for shade, or grass for a lawn? How long will they take to grow? How big should they be? How many do you need? What species will grow well in your area?
4. Statuary, garden ornaments and seating – use sparingly – just enough to set the mood and create areas of interest in the garden room
5. Be realistic – will the tree you want to plant grow into power lines, or have roots that will get into the drains?

### **Garden Room Components – What to Put in Your Garden Room**

You may find it helpful to decorate your garden room in the same way as you would decorate a room inside the house. Every room has walls, a ceiling, a floor, furniture and ornaments, each of which gives the room a distinct character.

In your 'garden room' the components include:

- walls – the 'wall' encloses and defines the space. It gives a strong vertical element to the design and sets the area apart from the rest of the garden. It could be a fence or solid wall, a lattice panel, a screen of plants or even a small garden bed
- floor – most often a grass lawn but it could be paved or surfaced with loose gravel
- ceiling – the sky is the most obvious component but overhead branches, pergolas, arbours, etc. also contribute
- furniture – not essential for every garden room but most areas could have at least one comfortable bench to encourage people to linger and enjoy the garden
- ornaments – plants are the most essential decorative features of the garden room; also statues, birdbaths, ponds, etc. will add charm and interest



### **SELF ASSESSMENT**

Perform the self assessment test titled 'test 1.1'.  
If you answer incorrectly, review the notes and try the test again.

### **SET TASK**

1. Visit three (3) different gardens and assess the mood of each garden. Take time to observe each garden and try to identify the different elements that contribute to the garden mood. (Garden visits are an important part of this course. You should read through the set tasks in all lessons to see if you can combine your garden visits for this lesson with the garden visits required for subsequent lessons.)
2. Observe how colour has been used in the three different gardens. Observe the colours of both plants and hard surfaces, and the way the colours have been combined.



### **ASSIGNMENT**

Download and do the assignment called 'Lesson 1 assignment'.