

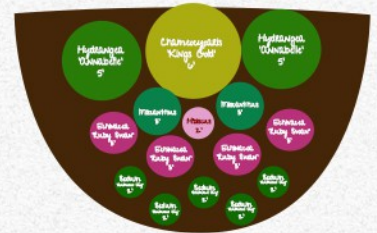
How to Create A

Beautiful Garden

That will Wow! Your Friends
...and put your Neighbors to shame.



Winter Interest
Garden Design



Create A Beautiful Garden

That will Wow! your Friends

...and Put Your Neighbors to Shame.

by Roots Nursery

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Picture yourself in the most serene setting, rich with nature... deep green foliage, wildly blooming flowers, and the sound of birds stopping by for a visit. One that consistently takes your breath away with each passing season. Now imagine that it's *your yard*. It only takes a little primer to create a BEAUTIFUL garden... and with this little guide, we're gonna show you how.

1. Planning

Know Your Yard.

To create a beautiful garden, you need to know what you're working with. If you're a gardener, you know your yard, but before you grab that shovel, spend some time in your yard, just looking. Owen Dell, author of *Sustainable Landscaping for Dummies* mentions that Zen designers in Japan spend an *entire year* 'looking', before they even think about touching anything. Good choices in the landscape are best made by careful observation.

Take a step back and really know all the areas of your yard by answering some questions. How much sun does it get? Where is the sun at different times of the day? year? Does the ground get enough water and where? Are there wet spots? Dry spots? What are your problem areas - and can any of it be corrected by adding elements to the landscape? What type of complications does your yard have you up against?

I'll give you an example. I know that our heavy clay soil will cause problems any time I dig *down*. Its going to flood. If Im going to alter the natural soil level, I must carefully consider drainage. I'm equally as careful when I build UP, to watch where the rain will flow.

Know What You Want

Getting what you want from your yard is a big deal when designing a plan. Knowing who will use the yard, for what purpose, and how much time you'll spend there - all good questions to ask.

- Are you looking for privacy - and would a natural hedge fit in your design?
- Do you have leisure areas that are too hot to be comfortable - and are there natural ways to create shade... is there room to grow a tree?
- Do you want an area to entertain guests - and is there room to add a patio, tables barbeque pit. Will you need electricity and how far from the house are you willing to go?
- Do you have children or grandchildren - will you need a play area or a path for foot traffic that can take a beating?
- Do you want to grow vegetables - will you plant them right in with your flowers or create a separate area, and will it be wide open to wild animals or pets?
- How much work will it take to maintain? Are you willing to spend that much time in your yard weeding, watering, mulching and mowing?

2. Design

After all that watching and learning, I bet you're ready to get started. You've dedicated the time, let's formulate a plan and bring it to life.

Landscape Design Basics

Though you're not limited in your design, two of the simplest design principles to start with are *Sets of Three* and *Tall to Short*.

Sets of Three

Odd numbered, or asymmetrical plantings provide an organic feel, more like what you'd find in nature. Sets of three (five, seven) in staggered groups will mix things up and look more natural.

Tall to Short

In order to see all of your plants, plant them tall to short, your tallest plants in the middle or back of a bed, working outwards or forwards with shorter plants, the shortest around your borders. You may not want to be TOO rigid with this idea, it should still look natural.

Sometimes, even with these two principles, you can create a beautiful garden. Other times it may not be that simple. Some landscapes offer more of a challenge. So let's dig deeper into design.

Color, Line, Form, Texture, Proportion.

1. **Color** – when it comes to color, we think of flowers first. Unlike annuals, most perennials will not flower all summer, so it is possible to plan different color schemes at different times of the year. Foliage also varies in color. Green, Blue-green / Gray, Lime Green / Gold, Purple. Many plants change showing their beautiful fall colors adding yellow, orange and reds. You can plan for seasonal interest and have a totally different colored landscape in the spring as you have in the fall. Along with trees, some shrubs such as Burning Bush, Forsythia, Viburnum, Spirea change color in the fall.

2. **Line** – A line is created by the edge between two materials, such as where the soil of a flower bed meets the grass. This is where you can get creative with your layout. Many landscapers create curved lines for a garden bed to replicate a treeline you might see in nature. A retaining wall or a rock path can also form a line. Use lines to segment your yard or create shapes in your landscape. Use it to direct the eye or even tell people where to go. A good example is to create a path up to a featured object in the yard, a patio, a favorite shrub, or even a birdbath.
3. **Form** – Forms are the geometric shape of plants or elements of your hardscape. Plant forms are usually upright, oval, columnar, spreading, arching / fountain-shaped, and weeping. Every object in your landscape will create a form. Hardscaping like patios will create squares and rectangles. You can control the form of your yard by choosing plants according to their shape and deciding their placement. You can repeat forms to create interesting patterns.
4. **Texture** – Texture is defined by how coarse or fine the surface of the plant or hardscape material is. Foliage, flowers, bark, mulch, sod, rocks, wood and concrete all have different textures. Use texture to add variety and contrast to your design.
5. **Proportion** – You'll need to know how big plants grow so they fit in scale with the surrounding elements. If you have a large house with a large yard, you'll probably fill it with large plants. If you have a small yard, 12 foot plants might seem out of sorts and hog up the place. Keep this balance in mind when choosing plants.

Right Plant Right Place

Is it a sun lover, or better in shade? Will it tolerate flooding/drought. Will it provide privacy all year long (evergreen)? How big does this plant get? Remember, your plants are going to GROW. Its common to plant them too close together, I've done it so often in the nursery. The result? An overcrowded space with plants competing for resources and survival.

With all the plant choices out there, getting the right plant in the right place might make you sink in your chair, so we've created a list of our top choice plants. We'd like to help you find plants that *you will love for years...* plants that will love you back for putting them in the right spot. This we hope will help you create a luxurious environment and will excite you year after year. Let's not forget... WOW your friends, and shame your neighbors :D

3. Plant Choices

List of top 'Choice Plants'

The list of plants is endless. To make it easy, here's our list of Top 5 Choice plants for each category, based on their beauty, hardiness and ease of maintenance. Most plants are rated zones 4 to 9, so they'll work for most of the United States.

When you need to fill large spaces, add interest to the farthest parts of the yard or to create a focal point, go with larger growing shrubs.

Large Shrubs Top 5:

1. Hydrangea	summer flowering	8-12 feet	medium growth
2. Weigela	spring/summer	5-6 feet	fast growing
3. Physocarpus	summer flowering	5-6 feet	medium
4. Kumson Forsythia	spring flowering	8-10 feet	very fast growing
5. Dappled Willow	no flowers	6-8 feet	very fast growing

To fill in around larger shrubs or create a smaller garden, we use flowering perennials.

Perennials Top 5:

1. Shasta Daisy	early summer	3-4 feet	white
2. Echinacea	summer	3-4 feet	purple (+)
3. Rudbeckia Goldsturm	summer	3-4 feet	yellow
4. Ornamental Grass	no flowers	varies	accent plant
5. Phlox Paniculata	summer flowering	2-4 feet	all colored flowers
6. Monarda	summer-late summer	1-3 feet	red, pink, purple white

For the front border or wherever you need short plants or ground cover.

Border Perennials Top 5:

1. Sedum	late summer	1-3 feet	looks great all summer
2. Geranium Groundcover	summer	1-3 feet	showy flowers
3. Stachys	spring	1-3 feet	2 kinds w/ & w/o flowers
4. Ajuga	early summer	6 inches	great groundcover
5. Coreopsis	early summer	1-3 feet	many types of flowers

Shade Gardens Top 5:

1. Hosta
2. Heuchera (coral bells) likes morning sun
3. Fern
4. Brunnera or Pulmonaria Dicentra
5. Astilbe

Annuals Top 5 (for containers)

1. Wave Petunia
2. Sweet Potato Vine. easy to grow, trailing.
3. Impatiens, Begonia, Coleus (shade - some are rated for sun)
4. Geranium
5. Calibrachoa. new hot container plant.

Garden Plans

To put it all together, we've designed some gardens to get you started. Take the brainwork out of designing a beautiful garden and go for it!

The Butterfly and Bird Garden

Keep the butterflies and birds coming back all summer with this beautiful, easy to install garden. It incorporates all the best flowers for attracting butterflies, small birds and hummingbirds, plus a wide range of flower and foliage color to delight us humans. Requiring only 12 x 14 feet, its easy to prepare, and with only 9 plants, its simple to establish. An overall winner for the beginning gardener.

[Download the Butterfly and Bird Garden here.](#)

The Winter Interest Garden

Love your yard all year long with this beautiful winter interest garden. Requiring approximately a 16 x 14 foot space, it features an impressive golden evergreen tree as a focal point, surrounded by lovely flowers all summer. Color combination, plant selection, shape and placement are all top notch in this garden, AND after the summer beauty fades, the winter interest kicks in.

[Download the Winter Interest Garden here](#)

4. Garden and Soil Prep

Weed Removal to Prepare Garden Beds

It's Time! Its finally time, but you gotta get those weeds out. Somehow. Its probably the most important prep step you can take. First, I must say, you're ALWAYS going to have some weeds. If you snuff them out from below, weed seeds will still blow to the top of your soil and start right back up again. You could vow to take exhaustive measures to prepare your beds, then stay diligently on top of weeding from there on out. Does this always happen? not exactly. We're human. And gardens should be fun. Here are some methods I've used to prepare garden beds for planting.

1. Chemical All Vegetation Kill Sprays. Some of you are cringing at the mere suggestion, I know, but zapping it with chemicals IS an effective way to kill all of the weeds quickly. If you're more hardcore organic, just say - 'next'...
2. 'Flip the Sod' Layering Technique. This method was taught to me by a mentor, and its a great no-till way to prepare a garden bed. You can effectively scoop up the sod layer with about an inch of dirt underneath, flip it over so the grass is facing downward, and cover it with layers of newspaper/dirt/mulch. The coolest thing about this method - it all decomposes under there, adding good stuff to the soil.

The grass will snuff itself out. The newspaper adds a barrier to ensure that it does. Dirt will give you a nice thick layer to plant into and bury your newspaper/grass layer effectively. And mulch will retain absorb water so you wont have to water as often. How much of each layer? Its entirely your choice how 'raised' your bed is. I'd say, lean toward the 'a lot' side. Not using enough will expose your newspaper after the first real rain. The more the better in my opinion. Keep in mind, dirt will compact over time and your raised bed will sink, so build higher to compensate.

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* A note about newspaper. I've used this all over my yard, it really does help keep the weeds down. Lay it on THICK and cover it well with dirt. On a few occasions, I've received a shipment of plants that NEEDED to get in the ground, but there were no beds prepared. I dug a hole straight into an open area, planted my plants, covered the surrounding grass with newspaper, then filled back the dirt from the hole. Crude, but it worked in a pinch. Did it last? Not very long, I needed to treat that bed again later that season, but it was extremely easy to do.

3. The 'Hot Summer' Clear Plastic Kill. The nursery has been in a state of 'under construction' for the last 3 years. Weed barriers under the pots is a must and plastic does the job well. I discovered how effective clear plastic is at killing grass when I ran out of black plastic. After three or four 90 degree days of hot sun shining through clear plastic, the grass was toast. So yes, this works best in summer. I haven't tried it in spring, but I imagine you might be waiting a while for the grass to die. You'll need a tiller for this method unless you're preparing a small area. I till as deep as my little Mantis will go. And since our soil is terrible clay, I add as much light weight compost as possible.

A Word About Good Soil

You probably know that most plants thrive in good soil. Get your soil right and you've already won half the battle. But how do you know what you have? There are three simple tests you can do without having to run out and buy anything. The Jar Test, pH test and the earthworm test. You can see how to do all three [here](#). In most cases your soil will need to be amended by adding organic matter which creates [great garden soil](#). Home builders strip much of the topsoil when building a new home and don't put it back. Adding rich homemade or store bought compost can help in almost every garden situation. Every year you can add another layer of compost to the top of your gardens, without having to dig up your plants. It will break down and add nutrients to the soil. You can use mulch as well. Adding mulch not only looks pretty, but it helps absorb water so you water less, and also breaks down adding nutrients to the soil. Each fall we gather leaves and cover our plants for the winter. Every spring we add wood chips as a mulch. Keep adding good stuff to your soil and your plants will love you for it.

A Word About Wood Chips

We use wood chips in our nursery wherever we don't want weeds to grow (thats everywhere isn't it?) A thick layer goes on top of every garden bed and every pathway here. We use wood chips as a mulch because it creates a natural organic weed barrier and adds organic matter to the soil, but the best reason of all... its free.

5. Install and Maintenance

Measure Your Space.

You'll need to measure your area correctly and place plants at the spacing suggested. If a shrub grows 8 to 12 feet with a 8 foot spread, mark your center and measure 4 feet out on both sides, plus desired spacing in between plants. It might look bare with small young plants, but in the early growing years, you can always fill in the space with perennials or annual flowers, until it starts to get crowded.

Dig Your Holes.

The rule of thumb for digging the correct size hole is: twice as deep and three times as wide as the rootball. Add some good compost to the dirt you'll fill the hole with. Mushroom compost is some of the best compost out there, but it can get expensive. Just make sure your compost is light and fluffy with a lot of organic material to feed your plants, and worms!

Planting.

When you plant your plant, make sure to look at where the stem meets the soil in the pot. This is the depth you want to plant, keeping that same soil level it's used to. Plant too deep and the stem will rot and the roots wont get air. Plant too high and the stem will dry out. Pack the soil in tightly around the plant. This will prevent 'heaving' (see below). Add 2-3" of mulch, making sure that its 3" away from the stem. Mulch retains water so you wont have to water as much, but it will also rot the stem if its too close.

Heaving happens in the winter when the freeze-thaw cycle contracts and expands the soil and pushes the plant up out of the ground. Make sure to check your plants throughout the winter to make sure this is not happening. If so, pack it back in the ground again tightly, or gently lift and replant, adding more soil.

Watering.

Keep your plants well watered until they're 'established' or well enough rooted into the ground to draw enough water to live on its on. You want the soil moist, not dry or waterlogged. Water well immediately after you plant, then wait until the top of the soil dry and water again. I like to water until it pools a little, let it soak in, and do this two more times. Avoid wetting the foliage. The point is to water the root ball and the soil around it so that the roots want to grow outwards, into your soil. This helps your plant establish itself faster. Make sure to keep an eye on your new plants and water more in drought conditions. Usually after the 2nd year your plants will be fully established and should be able to live on their own. Of course wilting is a sure sign that a plant needs more water, and even fully established plants sometimes need water.

Wrapping Up.

Well there it is, a BEAUTIFUL new garden that YOU created. Its always a wonderful feeling to sit back and look at a job well done. We hope that it brings you years of enjoyment and luxury to your home. If you found this guide useful, please, share it with a friend!

More About Us.

Roots Nursery is a back yard nursery on a one acre lot in the western suburbs of Chicago. Hardy, beautiful, easy to grow plants shouldn't cost an arm and a leg. Because were a 'homegrown' nursery without the expense other nurseries have, we can offer great prices. Not only are the plants affordable, we always get compliments on how beautiful and healthy they are.

We have huge weekend sales throughout the summer, starting in May. If youre not already on our email list and would like to receive sale day notifications, sign up on <http://rootsbackyardnursery.com>