



YARD OR GARDENS?

LANDSCAPE BASICS

A perennial garden can feature low-care plants that look good all the time. Or the alternative...





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Many American homeowners refer to their property as their yard (front yard, side yard, back yard, etc.) while in Europe and the Orient the word “yard” is unknown. The word “garden” is used instead. Americans often restrict the idea of a garden to a separate plot of land for specific types of plants (vegetable garden, etc.). Interestingly, both yard and garden have the same linguistic root. We get yard from Old English gearð (grounds around a building), and garden from Middle English gardin which was from the French jardin (garden). Is the difference just semantic or cultural? Think about it....would you rather be in a yard or be in a garden?

What is a yard? “Yard”, generally means lawn and lots of it. Next, a few shrubs, all regimented to stand in a line four feet away from the house. Unoriginal, the same plants appear time after time, house after house. No trees, or worse, butchered trees, pruned in half because of lack of knowledge about proper placement, selection and growth. The windows are covered up by overgrown plants or display only views of lawn or of the street. The “yard” seems unexciting, uninteresting and underutilized. A landscape design using the “yard” approach is really not a design; it is merely outdoor decoration or an unrelated collection of plants.

“Garden” on the other hand means a mix of plants and useful lawn areas for play or other activities. It is pleasing mix of all types of interesting plants (bulbs, perennials, shrubs, trees, etc.), some common, some not, to add an ever-changing quality. Shade trees planted in the proper locations for long-term environmental and aesthetic benefits. A garden is a skillful separation of the house from the street and a strong relationship to views and movement from the inside to the outside. It is the creation of interesting, beautiful, and useful spaces: outdoor “rooms” like Entrance Gardens, Deck or Patio Gardens.

A garden is exciting, dynamic and stimulating. A landscape designed as a garden is a series of related and connected spaces. These spaces are defined by the use of plants, structure, material surfaces, textures, and elevation changes. Just as indoor rooms are designed by architects and embellished and enhanced by interior designers, landscape architects and garden designers create and enrich outdoor rooms. These spaces can be “furnished” with plants and other materials or elements, too, for greater comfort and utility. Structures like arbors and fences add tasteful architectural quality, especially if matched to details on the home. Garden benches invite an afternoon conversation. An ever-changing palette of plants provides a colorful, fragrant four-season assault on your senses. Garden accents like water features; statuary, birdbaths and lighting provide the final details.