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# HOME & GARDEN

INSPIRED LIVING FOR BIRMINGHAM AND BEYOND

*touring*

**Lockerbie Hall**

*designer's*

*last hurrah*

**classically Italian**

*in Redmont Park*

**open gardens**

*in Birmingham*

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# STARTING **up**, STARTING **over**

**M**ost of us will begin to do a spring cleaning in our gardens as soon as the warm weather appears. And some of us will decide that our gardens need more than a spring cleaning—they need face-lifts! If you're considering overhauling your garden this year, you'll want to apply certain design principles so it won't have a look of happenstance about it.

The first thing to consider is style or theme. Some people want a structured, formal look, while others want a flowing,

## WHETHER STARTING A GARDEN FOR THE FIRST TIME OR OVERHAULING AN OLD ONE, KEEP UNITY AND BALANCE IN MIND.

informal look. As crazy as this may sound, why not incorporate both styles of design into your garden? You could choose a structured plant (formal), but have a moss rock border that has gentle curves (informal) instead of straight lines. There are lots of styles, and lots of ways to manipulate them for your garden. To help in your selection, first look at the inside of your home. Most people decorate their homes in a particular style that is most comfortable and enjoyable to them. When you choose the same style as the inside of your home, you are allowing the garden to be an outside "room" of

your house. It becomes an extension of your home. If you have a French Country style home, you might not want an elegant English garden with boxwood borders and roses in the center. You would probably feel more comfortable with flowing curves, a few accent plants and lots of perennials overflowing into the turf.

Once you have chosen your style, you can begin to plan your bed-lines. These are the lines within your landscape

that separate your planting areas from non-planting areas. Take the break between your turf and your shrubs, for example. That is called a bed-line. You begin laying out your bed-line to reflect the style that you have chosen.

Let's say that you want your garden to have a formal look. Your bed-lines should be straight lines, with angles instead of curves. Conversely, if you prefer an informal garden, then you might want bed-

lines with gentle curves instead of straight lines or sharp angles. Bed-lines are the foundation of any garden.

When planning the placement of your bed-lines, consider the design principles of unity and balance. Unity ensures that the eye does not settle on any single element, but follows the garden as a whole. You can also do this by following a second principle of design, which is balance. Balance, or the equalization of visual weight of objects in the landscape, also helps keep the eye from being pulled to a single dominance. When a landscape is balanced, it feels and appears to have equal weight in all directions. An example of this would be a landscape that has a bed-line on opposite sides of a garden, so that one side doesn't seem weighted and therefore is not pulling your eye in a single direction.



These same principles, plus a few more, should be applied during the plant placement phase of gardening. Dominance, or the authority of one element of design composition over all other parts, should be heavily considered, too. You would not want, for example, one of your shrubs to be twice as large as other shrubs in the same bed, unless you wanted to draw all the attention to that one plant.

Another principle to keep in mind is that of major contrast. This means one element is so strikingly different from all other elements in the composition that the others become subordinate to it. You

want all the plants in the bed to flow together and feel as if they all belonged together. You

would not want, for instance, the sharp points of a Chinese holly in the middle of a bed of free-flowing lacy Deodar cedars (*Cedrus deodara*).

Don't forget the principle of repetition, where you repeatedly use an element's form, size, tone, or texture throughout the design in a way that provides unity. You might use a repetition of Nellie R. Stevens hollies (*Ilex X Nellie R. Stevens*) to create a screen or a wall in your garden, for example, or you might



want a single row of American boxwoods on the front foundations of your home.

Once you know where your beds will be, and what type of plants you want placed, choosing the individual plants will be easy. There are all sorts of colors, textures, and forms to choose from. By applying the principles of design to the bed-lines and plant placement, you will narrow your selection to a few choices that are sure to be appealing to the eye.

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