



CAN'T THINK OF A FINER PLACE to have an *al fresco* party than in a garden that accommodates group gatherings or individual conversation. Springtime in the outdoors can be wonderful enough, but a picturesque setting adds fun and interest. Just think: fresh air, cool breezes, and fragrances of fresh clipped box! You, too, can have all of this by planting a parterre garden.

I know I just lost most of you after that last sentence. But hang with me—a parterre garden doesn't have to be complicated. Let me help you. The pronunciation is: pār-ter. And the definition of a parterre is simply a garden with paths between beds that are bordered with tightly clipped hedges. The French word, meaning “on the ground,” dates to around the year 1639.

Most of today's parterres have boxwoods bordering a bed of flowers. You can also just use a simple groundcover. Best of all, a parterre garden can be created in any size. All you need are the correct plants and a design layout that tickles your fancy.

When I create any garden I always follow these steps. I start with my soil, and it's not dirt—according to my former soils professor. I make sure the soil drains well, while at

## prescription for a parterre

Classic, clipped hedges define your garden spaces

BY TROY RHONE

PHOTO BY EDWARD BADHAM

the same time holding enough moisture and nutrients for the plants to thrive.

Then, I make sure all the areas that are to become graveled walkways are made of a very hard, firm soil. After it is in place, I tamp this soil down to remove all the oxygen and create a lasting solid surface. Now the walkways are ready for gravel.

Next the plants go in. I space my plants close enough together that it creates a little bit of an instant hedge effect, while leaving some room for the plants to spread and grow. Once planted, I give them a trim and finally spread my gravel over all the bed and walkway areas. Now, there's a parterre garden that is simple, elegant, and timeless. 🌿

### PARTERRE HEDGE CHOICES:

- ..... Dwarf boxwoods
- ..... Low-growing yews
- ..... Dwarf Japanese and yaupon hollies
- ..... Dwarf honeysuckle