

HOMIE

GREAT GARDEN TIPS FROM THE PROS



A backcountry landscape design with true wow factor

BY MARY KATE HOGAN

Springing Ahead

Sure, March may be a chilly, damp month but we all know what's right around the corner

Like impatient kids near the end of a long road trip, garden enthusiasts reach this time of year and can't help thinking, Is it spring yet? Still, the months leading up to the greenest season have their perks, providing much-needed time for dreaming and planning. To help get your creative gardening juices flowing for the upcoming season, we talked to some local pros about ideas and inspiration, plants to try, and tips on avoiding costly mistakes.

CREATING VISUAL APPEAL

EVOKE THE SENSES

Creating an interesting garden goes beyond what we see, explains Cleo Abrams-Horsburgh, partner landscape architect at **Conte & Conte**. "Sensory gardens and components that involve sound, light, music, color, texture—things that in the past were designed for healing or therapeutic gardens—are now in demand with much more mainstream audiences," she says. Among many elements Conte & Conte has used are laminar jugs, high-tech arching fountains that have visual and tactile interest, and musical elements such as chimes and gongs.

CREATE CONTRASTS

"Texture is an often-overlooked element that can add a subtle or even louder twist on traditional plantings and landscapes," says Maggie Bridge, manager of sales and marketing of **Sam Bridge Nursery**. Try mixing sleek broadleaf evergreens such as boxwood, cherry laurels or ilex with a finer, sharper textured juniper or chamaecyparis for contrast.

BRING IN STRUCTURE

Statuary, fountains, obelisks and even outdoor furniture can help add a wow factor to your ever-changing garden, says Maggie. "These provide you with a year-round anchor as the garden moves through the seasons, complementing and even adding a welcome juxtaposition between the hard and soft components of your outdoor space."



Bright, bold color never gets old when it comes to creating a striking entrance.



interest, advises John Conte, AIA and co-owner of Conte & Conte. Examples include ornamental grasses that turn to a russet color in fall and winter and perennials such as black-eyed Susans that become seed stalks and attract birds in the fall.

Fountains not only add visual appeal, but also offer a meditative component.

Maximizing backyard space can sometimes mean reducing the clutter.

WORK WITH NATURE

Unblock natural rock outcroppings and use the rock formations to create new living spaces where family and friends can gather. Add a fire pit for more interest and extended use of your outdoor space, again creating more together time, says James McArdle of **McArdle's**.

HIGHLIGHT YOUR BEST FEATURES

If you're building a new home, you may want

to manipulate land to organize a site and remove visual clutter, says Justin Quinn, studio director of **Doyle Herman Design Associates**. "By changing the topography, the designer can highlight specific areas of interest; these features may include a specimen tree, an interesting rock formation or maybe an added piece of art."

PICK MULTI-SEASON PLANTS

Look for structural plants that have year-round



TOP AND CENTER, CONTE & CONTE; BOTTOM RIGHT, DOYLE HERMAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

TRENDS 2018 NEW & NOTEWORTHY

1. GREEN APPROACH

Recycled materials are big. "We just finished a landscape at a historic farm where the walls, terraces and walks were comprised of locally sourced repurposed materials," says Justin of **DHDA**. "The bluestone terracing once served as public sidewalks, the granite walks once curbed roadways. We even approached a nearby neighbor and purchased a stockpile of wall stone that sat in a farmer's field for over twenty years. Not only is this sustainable, but the newly completed landscape begins its life with some much desired patina."

2. HIGH-TECH

Heated patios, terraces and driveways have become more popular. So, too, have outdoor spotlight speaker systems that are controlled by smartphones and direct a rich sound toward the middle of a property so it doesn't bother the neighbors. And techy tools are being used in planning landscapes, says Cleo of **Conte & Conte**, including drone photography to create 3-D models of properties and virtual reality goggles that give clients a realistic sense of what it would feel like to walk through a garden.

3. NEW HUES

"New colors and better growing reboots of old favorites are all over," says Maggie. **Sam Bridge Nursery** trialed the new osteospermum from Proven Winners last year and found it to be a fantastic grower that the nursery will have available in early spring.



4. PAINTING WITH PLANTS

Creating art with plants, hardscape and nature's beauty isn't a new theory, but it's slowly being revived, says James McArdle of **McArdle's**. Think simple lines, more greenery and symmetry in the landscape with container plantings to add color.

When hardscape, landscape and nature all work together, your space is in true harmony.

Simple and sweet can sometimes be the way to go.



MISTAKES TO AVOID

ALWAYS PLANTING IN PAIRS

It's better to stick to odd numbers when planting a group that's less than nine, according to Maggie Bridge. She also advises gardeners against "volcano mulching," which is when mulch is piled too high around a tree trunk and can lead to insect and rodent damage and create too much moisture. Instead, leave a two- to three-inch ring that's free of mulch around the tree trunk.

OVERBUILDING

Too often we are called to projects where the home's footprint is too large," says Justin Quinn. Instead, work with your design team to select a footprint that achieves your goals while preserving important site resources. Also, Pinterest can be inspiring but don't try to incorporate all your favorite ideas into one landscape or you'll wind up with a mishmash of elements.

SIZING IT WRONG

The biggest mistake made by inexperienced landscapers is planting the wrong plant in the wrong space, says James McArdle. Know what you are planting and the size it will be. "Stop trying to fit a large hydrangea where you need a dwarf hydrangea; stop planting green giant arborvitae where you need emerald green arborvitae."

MISSING TEAM PLAYERS

If you rely on an architect to be the driver of a new home and bring in a landscape architect only after the fact, you won't have the best design outcome, says John Conte. "A project works best starting with the landscape architect and civil engineers looking at the project and its constraints," he says. "The landscape as it exists naturally should direct the architectural features; the architecture shouldn't force the landscape."