

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

CONTEMPORARY GARDEN



WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY?

Contemporary literally has to be one of the broadest categories in terms of style and design. By definition, contemporary means, belonging to or occurring in the present. Based on this definition, contemporary is not a static style. Instead, it is always changing

WHAT IS MODERN GARDEN?

Modern gardens are characterized by being clean-lined, hard-edged, and minimalistic. Modern landscape usually tends to have concrete and/or metal incorporated into the design and holds true to the cliché that less is more.

THE MODERN GARDEN

- There is an ever-growing trend toward a simple, contemporary garden – one that works for a smaller yard or for those seeking a water-wise or an easy-care garden.
- These gardens have an emphasis on hardscape of stone, wood and concrete, with bold architectural plants incorporated. Water features, sculpture and containers are important in the contemporary garden; and plants, while fewer in numbers, are actually highlighted and add drama. We are more likely to notice a plant's stunning attributes when it is not competing against scores of other plants for attention.

ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN

CONCRETE STEPPERS

Inexpensive and highly versatile: precast concrete stepping-stones are the perfect geometric form for surfacing. Round, square or rectangular; small or massive slabs; exposed aggregate or smooth surface, these are an affordable way to get just the right look.



ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN

METAL GRIDS

Originally created as reinforcement mesh for concrete and masonry, welded wire panels of varying density are ideal fencing materials. Use as screen panels for vines, combine with wood planks or create a revolutionary idea with new or recycled segments.



ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN

COBBLES

The rounded, natural form of river stone is the perfect contrast for rigid, man-made industrial materials. They offer an excellent surfacing texture for those difficult spaces that can be turned into serious design opportunities. Widely available in a range of colors and sizes.



SLICK POTS

Follow the same clean lines as the rest of the landscape. Cylindrical or square, composed of resin or ceramic, metals with or without patina, containers paired with a plant featuring bold sculptural form doubles the overall impact.



ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN

CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE

Reflections of the great modern-era designers can be found in the furniture for these gardens. Stainless steel and chrome alternate with dense polyester mesh and bright plastics to render these functional places to recline or dine into stylish environments.



SOME PRINCIPLES OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN DESIGN:

1. Simplicity - In the contemporary garden "less is more". Whilst a contemporary garden doesn't have to be minimal, clutter and chaos would detract from the overall statement.
2. A strong sense of 'geometry' - It doesn't have to be a rectilinear approach nor circles but a 'constructivist' structure is what makes any design contemporary.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF CONTEMPORARY GARDEN DESIGN:

3. Planting - Contemporary planting schemes can be best identified by few elements:
 - a) Meaning, really a choice of just a few plant varieties. Not as many as in a cottage garden. Strong groups of the same: think 10's and 20's rather than 3's and 5's.
 - b) Dramatic statements. Usually achieved with plants with strong foliage or texture.
4. Few Materials - Few materials work best, also choose materials which contrast well. Natural (elemental) materials always can be favored, but many designers use plastic, concrete and a whole range of synthetic products with great contemporary effect.

OPT FOR A NATURAL, LOOSE PLANTING STYLE

Neatly organized lines of stiff, sculptural plants are the norm in many contemporary landscapes, as though the architect wanted to impose the minimalist structure of the building on the exterior spaces. Yet this type of planting style seems to utterly reject any relationship with the natural world.



USE PLANTS TO CONNECT YOUR GARDEN WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS

Plants with bold silhouettes have a clean look which feels appropriate next to the architecture. The designs of the outer edges of the planted areas almost as one would weave a tapestry, creating a loose fabric of textures and colors which blurs the boundary lines of the landscape and visually claims the scenery beyond



DON'T FORGET LAYOUT & LIGHTING

The layout of the landscape also plays a part in adding warmth. “What we do is pull the plantings into the hard spaces by using planters, either elevated or on the ground plane, within patio areas,” says Miller. When the plantings are raised up, the plantings within become a more tangible and focal part of the design. When confronted with a slope, Miller sees an opportunity to use retaining walls to elevate the plantings so they are a stronger visual element.



EXPRESS YOUR PERSONALITY WITH ARTFUL TOUCHES

While it's sometimes fun to follow trends, the lime green and orange cushions that are so popular in modern gardens right now can easily overwhelm the design of a space. Instead, look to your planting palette for cues. Repeating a color found in an ornamental grass or flower is more personal to your landscape, and won't be out of fashion next season.

The liveliness of nature also elevates the elegance of a simple design. Native plants and pollinator-attracting perennials also play a part in bringing balance and connection to a structured contemporary space.



SIMPLE GEOMETRY

Like classical architecture, formal garden design has its roots in the geometry of Greek and Roman architecture. Formal gardens tend to emphasize straight lines, right angles and circles.



BALANCED PROPORTIONS

Proportion — how the size of each part of the garden relates to the whole — is central to classical architecture and landscape design. Mathematical principles such as the golden ratio and the Fibonacci series (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 ...) have been used for centuries as ways to bring beauty and balance to designs.



DESIGNING ALONG THE AXIS

Much classical landscape design makes use of bilateral symmetry, in which shapes and forms of equal size are placed opposite one another at a point or along an axis. This creates a sense of order and gives the design a feeling of balance. In a large garden, long axes tend to dominate, but in a smaller garden they can be an efficient way to use limited space: Symmetrical gardens tend to be calming and don't jar the eye.

Axes are often terminated with a focal point (a piece of sculpture or a plant with a sculptural quality) whose form contrasts with the straight lines of the design.



COHESION

Repeating forms throughout a garden can help bring cohesion to a design. Here the sharp wooden steps and trees (plants) bring the cohesion in design.



GOOD BONES

Walls, fences, evergreen plantings, paths and patios are aspects of the garden you can see all year. They form the structure, or “bones,” of the garden. When thoughtfully laid out, they provide interest even in winter.

