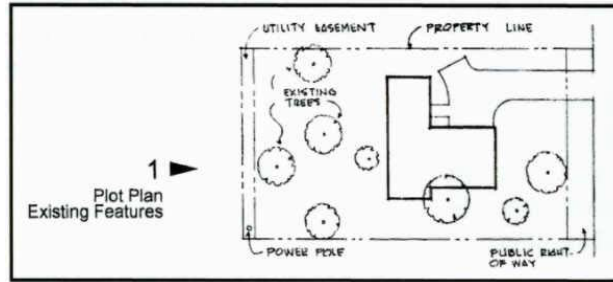


EARLY SPRING DESIGN REVIEW

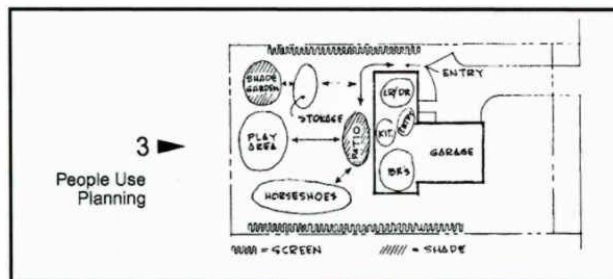
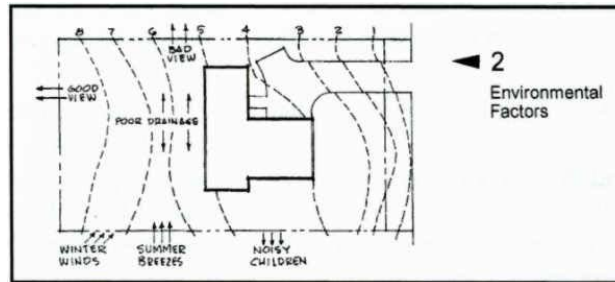
Start Planning Now for the Garden You Want

by Sylvia Fee Chattin

Early Spring marks the close of the armchair gardening season. But before you start digging in that garden, take some prime time to review your garden plan. And I'm not talking about those seductive plant catalogs. Put them aside for awhile and consider your resting garden. Dream of its potential. When I began gardening I knew it was all about plan. Through time and observation I learned that a garden is all about its place, that unique spot unlike any other on earth.



Nowadays my definition of a garden is "Working with site advantages and disadvantages to bring a place into a harmonious and ever changing entity." A garden is a place to linger. Last September I visited the gardens at the Getty Museum complex in Santa Monica, CA. The lyrical Central Garden was interpreted from a painting by the artist Robert Irwin. He observed the site and painted his concept of an ideal garden for that space. Irwin's art functioned as the working plan for the garden. I was enchanted with its many surprises as I followed its pathways. Selection of plant materials was a piece of the plan. However, the utilization of the site was the genius of it all. It was a place to linger.



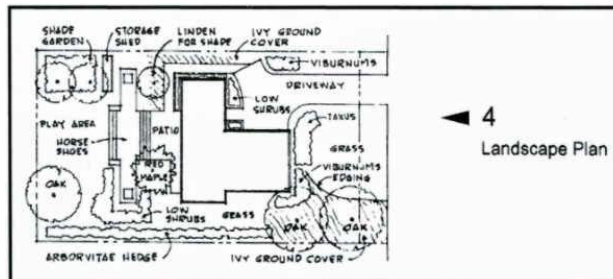
For many of us the cultivation of that glorious genus *Hemerocallis* is the focus of our gardens. Personally, I always made a better garden when the effect I desired was my first consideration, before a single plant was selected. All garden sites have their challenges and give up their best when those situations are recognized at the outset. Is the grade too steep? Too shady? Too exposed to wind, salt spray, soil in poor condition? How about irrigation and drainage? These are impediments best tackled way before the plant catalogs. Access must be considered when designing plant beds. How does one make way in the plant beds for necessary maintenance? Keep in mind that edges and walkways can enhance a planting bed as a frame enhances a picture.

Readers of these phrases have already built gardens and may wish to make them even more attractive or resolve some difficulty they perceive. Steep grades and abrupt changes in grade may be utilized into terraces, attractive walls and water courses. Opportunities for bridges (no matter how slight) enhance the experience of the garden, and may invite unique planting

placements. The layout and placement of planting spaces is accomplished by a comprehensive survey of the site. In addition the views from inside the home may beg special attention.

Look at your garden from the highest window in the house. See unity and flow in the layout? Interesting stop and go spots? Perhaps the garden would prosper from a major make-over; installing a background of plants or fence or wall. Maybe a space needs to be opened up by removing tired plants and pruning trees. I like the term space in reference to a garden because "space" immediately conjures up 3 dimensions and time in my mind. Not merely a place to be viewed down upon, but a space with butterflies, bees, people and time. A few quick garden fixes include getting edges sharp or crisp along geometric path intersections because paths are the frame around your "picture."

Cutting diagonal paths through squares or rectangles or designing triangles adds interest and jazz to geometric beds. Try some neatly jutting and retreating zigzag edges, perhaps leading in to a special space or niche. Circles and arcs add focus and serve as important "stops." Water features have become a part of many gardens.



Geometric paths enhance vistas. Sinuous pathways suggest mystery and invite a slower pace and they give a sense of shelter, rest and secret places. Contrasts may be subtle. This is not to suggest that

square plots dictate geometry and irregular areas call for asymmetry. Let the site speak to you of all its possibilities. You know that clutter is neither pretty nor interesting, so choose a set-aside spot for your trials or irresistible oddities.

Treating garden areas as open-air rooms can give cohesion to a plan and leaves a place for special plant collections or seasonal displays. Late Winter can be your best time to make these big changes. So layout your garden plan, plot the changes you want and need, then dig in before the digging begins.

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