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Design Tips for Sensational Sustainable Flower Gardens

N = Native or nativar to North America

8 Design Tips *Movement in the Garden *Repetition *Color as a Design Element *Garden Up! *Dazzling Foliage Rules *Less-More-Less *Pass the Color Baton *No-Fuss Spring Blooming Bulbs

Design Tip #1: Movement in the Garden

-When recommending ornamental grasses to clients, in addition to considering a grass's height, shape & texture, it's also important to take into account if it's a cool or warm season grass

Cool Season Grasses: These break dormancy in early spring, quickly providing volume and impact. Some are semi-evergreen in winter. These make great 'foils' for the dying foliage of spring blooming bulbs and are ideal for front & center in gardens. Most cool season grasses are 3' or shorter (Feather Reed Grass is one exception). They also flower earlier- late spring-early summer

Warm Season Grasses: These are slow to break dormancy and grow very slowly until early summer. These are the grasses that are prized for fall and winter interest in the landscape. Flower later – summer-fall. Some get very tall (e.g. Miscanthus). Look especially grand when backlit by the sun.

-Switch Grass *Panicum virgatum* 'Northwind' N 5'- 6' Warm season grass

-Feather Reed Grass *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' Cool season grass 4'-5' with Mexican Bush Sage

-Warm and cool season grasses in spring landscape. Left, Miscanthus—remains dormant until early summer! Right, Blue Fescue

-*Sporobolus heterolepis* Prairie Drop Seed Sun 2'-3' Z4-9 Native Warm season grass

-Rotary Botanical Gardens (WI). Design idea: Plant cool season annuals around charred clumps as a screen (Snapdragons, Pansies, *Osteospermum*)

Design Tip #2: Repetition in the Garden

-By repeating the same plant OR color in a garden & neighboring gardens, you're leading a viewer's eye through the landscape, as well as unifying the entire space

-An interesting spin on repetition of the same plant. A river of Geranium 'Rozanne' with Crocosmia 'Lucifer', Shasta daisy and Redbud 'Forest Pansy'. Designed by Adrian Bloom

-Repeating a color using plants with similar colored foliage Bill Noble's gardens in Norwich VT Z4

-Repeating color using objects. This is one of the easiest ways for clients to enjoy their favorite color, year-round.

-Chanticleer : Grapevine arches are repeated through the cutting garden

Design Tip #3: Color Considerations Hot versus cool colors

Most gardens are a mix of hot and cool colors. Some lean more towards hot... Others towards cool....

Delphinium, Campanula 'Pritchard's Variety', Lychnis 'Maltese Cross', Foxtail Lily (*Eremurus*)

-BUT There are some locations that call for more hot colors...

*Shade Gardens. Cool colors are difficult to see in low light – especially from a distance.

*Full Sun Gardens benefit from hot bold colors

-Pastel colors can 'bleach out' in intense sun

-Hanging Baskets. Hot colors are easier to see from a distance than cool colors. Flower size is also important

Design Tip #4 Garden Up! Go vertical for another dimension of color & interest in the landscape (especially important in smaller gardens)

- ‘**Ramblin’ Red’** climbing rose (First Editions) Sun 6’-10’+ Early summer – fall Z 3/4 – 8
- Canadian Explorer Climbing Rose ‘William Baffin’** Sun 8’-10’ Early Summer Z3-8
- Clematis. **Advantages of working with Group 3 Clematis**
 - *Easy for clients to remember when to prune: Can be cut back to within inches of the ground every fall
 - *Pruning in fall removes ugly scraggly looking stems in the winter landscape
 - *Less prone to Clematis wilt
 - *Many flower colors and heights to choose from **Clematis ‘Polish Spirit’** 8’-12’ Z 4-8 June – September
- Lonicera Honeysuckle p. ‘Peaches and Cream’** Sun 6’-10’ Summer Z4-9 Fragrant!
Growing up a rusty steel trellis on the side of my front porch. It creates a fragrant privacy screen.
- American Wisteria *frutescens* ‘Amethyst Falls’** Native Can grow to 20’-30’ Z 4 – 9
Blooms in first year versus many Asian Wisteria (invasive) that can take up to 10 years to bloom
- Vines as groundcovers. Clematis x ‘Arabella’ 3’-6’ Group 3 Z 4-9

Design Tip #5 Incorporate colorful foliage in gardens for month after month of color. Tony & Marie Newton’s 1/3 Acre Garden in England. The Four Seasons Garden

- Instead of a garden comprised of entirely green foliage, mix in other colors...
- My garden. Only Astilbe ‘Visions in Red’ in bloom. Other plants: Cercis ‘Flame Thrower’, Dicentra ‘Gold Heart’, Actaea ‘Blue Mist’, Pulmonaria, Heuchera, Heuchera ‘Northern Exposure Purple’, Variegated Astrantia ‘Vanilla Gorilla’, Variegated 5-Leaf Aralia shrub
- Only one Azalea in bloom. Others: Linder (Spicebush), Cornus ‘Wolf Eyes’, Brunnera, Heuchera ‘Wild Rose’, Gold Lily-of-the-Valley (Fernwood’s Golden Slipper), Acorus ‘Ogon’, dwarf Ajuga ‘Cordial Canary’, Hakone ‘All Gold’ and Lady’s Mantle
- Hakone grass ‘Aureola’, Heuchera ‘Carnival Cinnamon Stick’ & ‘Wildberry’, Weigela ‘My Monet’, Heuchera ‘Mega Caramel’, Brunnera ‘Queen of Diamonds’, Hydrangea q. ‘Little Honey’, Fothergilla ‘Blue Shadow’, Weigela ‘My Monet Purple Effect’, Cornus ‘Wolf Eyes’, Carex ‘Everillo’, Hakone grass ‘All Gold’
- I recommend that at least 1/3 – 50% of plants in sun to part sun gardens should have eye-catching foliage. The percentage increases to 50% or more in part shade to shade gardens

Design Tip #6 Less....More....Less...

- Instead of designing a garden with dozens of different plants, choose a small number of rockstar plants.
- Rockstars plants each provide 2 or more seasons of striking color from flowers OR flowers & foliage. Be careful to include plants that go into peak bloom in different seasons (spring, summer and fall)
- Since you have fewer plant varieties to design with, you will use greater numbers of each rockstar plant to fill the garden area *This slashes maintenance time because as you do maintenance, you are using the same tool & motion on a number of plants at the same time. This is highly efficient method dramatically reduces maintenance.
- Designed by Roy Diblik (Owner Northwind Perennial Farm, WI) Coneflower, Calamintha *nepeta*, Allium ‘Summer Beauty’, Autumn Moor Grass
- Four seasons of interest using only 4 plant varieties. Bressingham Gardens in UK. Garden designed by Adrian Bloom. Red-Twig Dogwood (Cornus a. ‘Aurea’); Common Yew (Taxus *baccata*) ‘Robusta’; Hakone grass (Hakonechloa *macra*) ‘All Gold’ and Black Mondo grass
- Design Suggestions Using Four Plant Combos: Shrub, Perennial, Spring Blooming Bulb, Annual
Sun – Part Sun: Hydrangea p. ‘Bobo’, Geranium ‘Rozanne’, Species Tulip ‘Little Princess’, and Lantana ‘Luscious Marmalade’
- Part Shade – Shade. Ilex *glabra* ‘Gem Box’ Inkberry 3’ N, Heuchera PRIMO ‘Wildberry’ 8”-12”, Erythronium a. Trout Lily 4”-6” N, Torenia ‘Catalina Pink’ 8”-12”

Design Tip #7: Pass the Color Baton.

Extending the bloom time of your client’s favorite flowers

- Combine Early, Mid and Late Season Bloomers Within the Same Genus. Early: Astilbe ‘Fanal’; Mid: c. ‘Dark Side of the Moon’; Late: c. ‘Pumila’
- Dark leaves can be difficult to see, especially: *from a distance *in shade *surrounded by dark mulch

To help 'shine the light' on dark leaves, pair with gold/yellow/chartreuse foliage

-Photo Proven Winners 'Weigela 'Midnight Wine' Where Creeping Yellow Jenny is invasive, subs could include Veronica *p.* 'Aztec Gold', Sedum 'Angelina', Creeping Yellow Thyme 'Archer's Gold', or Lamium 'Aureum'.

-Peony. Woodland Peony (*P. japonica*) Grows in Part Shade; Tree Peony Woody Shrub 3'-4'+; Itoh Peony 'Julia Rose' Stiff stems; 'Sarah Bernhardt'*there are early, mid, late in *lactiflora* species

-Allium. July-August Allium 'Millenium'; August-early Sept. 'Medusa'; September-October 'Ozawa'

-Some other perennial genus with early, mid 7 late bloomers: Phlox, Aruncus, Lilium, Sedum.

-Mix & Match to Get the LOOK Your Client's Love - Longer!

-Early: Viburnum *plicatum* 'Popcorn' Spring; Mid: Hydrangea *arborescens* 'Incrediball' or 'Annabelle' N;

Late: Hydrangea *paniculata* 'Puffer Fish'

Design Tip #8 Plant Long-lived, Deer Resistant, Naturalizing Flowering Bulbs with Foliage that Ripens Pretty Quickly!

-**Tip for extending the bloom time.** The general rule is to plant bulbs at a depth of 3X their height.

BUT I've found that by varying the planting depth by an inch or two, can delay blooming, resulting in a longer flowering season. I've done this with Tulips, Crocus, Daffodils, Gladiolus, and many other bulbs. Of course, another option is buying early, mid and late blooming cultivars.

-**Species Tulips** Sun – Part Shade usually under 10" Below: *greggii* 'Red Riding Hood'. All *greggii* Tulips have striking foliage

-If you are going to use short-lived Tulips, then get more bang for your buck by growing varieties with:

multiple flowers per stem AND/OR dazzling foliage. 'Red Bouquet' - up to four flowers per stem. 'Sweet Impression' a Darwin hybrid. Variegated leaves

-**Miniature Daffodil 'Tete-a-Tete'** with species tulips ('Johann Straus') in my garden. 'Tete-a-Tete' is fragrant and produces 2 to 3 flowers per stem! 6"-8"

-**Fritillaria meleagris Checkered Lily** Sun – Part Shade 8"-12" Z3-8

-**Ipheion uniflorum Starflower** Sun – Part Shade 6"-10" Similar to smaller Crocus (*C. tommasinianus*) Starflower is a good choice for naturalizing in lawns

-**Erythronium americanum Yellow Trout Lily** Part Shade 4"-6" Z3-9 Native **E. californicum (also revolutum) 'White Beauty'** Fawn Lily Part Shade 8" Z5-9

-**Allium karataviense Turkistan Onion** Sun 7"-12" Z4-8

-**Camassia quamash** Sun-Part Shade 3'-4' Z4-9 Late blooming Native Flowers can be white, cream, blue or purple

-**Colchicum autumnale Autumn Crocus** Sun – Part Shade 6"-9" August – September Z4 – 9 Flowers can be purple, pink, lilac, yellow or white

Thank you!

*Kerry's Four Gardening Books available at <https://pyours.com/product-category/book/>

*Please check out the ONE-HOUR, HOW-TO GARDENING VIDEOS (\$15.95 each) & SPECIAL BUNDLE OFFERS <https://pyours.com/product-category/video/>

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