

DESIGNING THE STRUCTURE AND SPACE OF THE WINTER GARDEN

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I. DESIGN IS ABOUT SPACE, NOT PLANTS: THE CREATION OF USABLE SPACE.

A. **This presentation focuses first on spatial development.** It is the structure of the dormant garden in winter that tells you whether you have succeeded in your design.

- *“We are used to describing the landscape as a collection of physical objects such as buildings, trees, shrubs, and fences rather than the space itself.”ⁱ*

B. Definitions

1. **Space (or void)** can be used interchangeably

- *“Any 3 dimensional void or hollowness contained by the sides or edges of surrounding elements.”ⁱⁱ*
- *“It takes some adjustment and training to view outdoor space as the ‘void’ between the objects normally seen.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Space itself is the subject, the shape to be defined and designed, rather than **the remnant left behind from planting beds and hardscapes.**

2. **Planes of enclosure**

- **Base plane** (the floor of an outdoor room)
 - ◇ *“The primary plane on which the designer organizes the proposed design. The organization of uses (functions) is determined directly on the base plane.”^{iv}*
 - ◇ open areas: lawn, ground covers, paving, water, laid out on a plan view drawing
 - ◇ **every line in the base plane creates 2 shapes...**inside and out. Don't let a cool walk line make a compromised bed or lawn shape
- **Vertical Plane** (the walls of an outdoor room)
 - ◇ *“Established by site elements such as the facades of a house, walls, fences, foliage mass of trees & shrubs, tree trunks, and/or steeply sloped ground. ...The vertical plane's most prominent role in the landscape is one of enclosure.”^v*
 - ◇ **Structures:** The constructed architectural features of the site...buildings, walls, fences, pergolas, etc.
 - ◇ **Mass:** Structural Plantings: the volume contained by plants; trunks, branches, foliage. These plantings should retain a winter presence.
- **Overhead plane** (the ceiling of an outdoor room)
 - ◇ *“...created by canvas awnings, overhead trellises, arbors, pergolas, the bottom of tree canopies, or even the clouds in the sky”^{vi}*
 - ◇ Overhead planes have two functions:
 - Influence the amount and quality of light that enters a space
 - Influence the perceived scale of a space: low canopy creates intimate settings; High canopy creates uplifting, lofty settings

II. SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Successful space needs:

1. Sufficient space for the function
2. Planes of enclosure
3. Spatial character: Color, texture, shape, theme, etc.
 - This character will change with the seasons

B. Design the space from the inside out

1. Visualize the design with you being in the space...there are many points of view
 - **your view of the garden from inside the home. (Particularly important for winter garden views...literally from the inside out!**
 - ◇ This is a primary principle of Japanese garden design...bringing the outside into the home
2. Spaces are created and separated by means of the vertical plane: structures, and mass (structural plantings) of various scale (can even be lawn to groundcover).
3. *"The mass must be sufficient to 'Hold' the space."*^{vii} Proportion/composition
4. Nearly all structures require some structural planting to soften and anchor (hold) them.
5. ***Outdoor space often tends to be defined by subtle rather than by obvious enclosure***

III. ***Design the winter garden first!***

If the spaces have been well designed and anchored, the integrity and character of the garden remain intact.

A. **Visual dynamics of plants in winter**

1. **Evergreens remain the same!** Use them appropriately but rarely exclusively...trees, shrubs, groundcovers. **Evergreens stand out in winter and control much of the eye movement through a scene...all the planes...base, vertical, and overhead.** They evoke shelter and safety in winter
 - **Evergreen Trees**
 - ◇ Conical, full to the ground...the effect is a solid wall, or dominant points to guide the eye through a longer view. How close the viewer is to the tree(s) makes the difference.
 - ◇ Higher branched, like a mature pine...the effect is a canopy and a welcome into points beyond because you can see beneath the branches

- **Evergreen Shrubs in winter...1'-12'**
 - ◇ Subtle screening but also shelter. (Our cat and lots of birds like the bamboo...both are safe) Three cheers for bamboo!
- 2. **Deciduous trees and shrubs reveal their bones...**
 - Sometimes this is their best showing
 - ◇ Bark color, berries, seed heads
 - ◇ Branching form including character pruned plants...tree wisteria anyone?
- 3. **Herbaceous perennials and groundcovers disappear?**
 - **Not always**, maybe not as vibrant, but some can be persistent
 - ◇ Liriope spicata, sedges, vinca, pachysandra
 - ◇ Heuchera, hellebore, epimedium (well...the leaves are still there)
 - ◇ Grasses!

B. Seasonal activity and visual dynamic changes in the garden

1. Interaction and function in the spaces change.
 - However, we still use the front public entry, driveway ingress and egress, see views from the street, and views from the inside the buildings.
 - Color and texture become subdued
2. Garden will be **viewed primarily from inside the home in colder climates**.
 - the interior viewpoint is important in all seasons, but especially so in winter.
3. **Structural plantings should:**
 - Still define the space
 - Still anchor all architectural features
 - Still guide the eye to pleasant views

B. Winter offers different challenges and opportunities for design:

1. **Seasonal color and texture**
 - See plant dynamics above
 - **Nonliving elements come forward visually in winter, recede in summer**
 - ◇ Boulders/stone arrangements
 - ◇ Structures...sheds, pergolas, fences, gates, etc.
 - Sculptures and other focal points
 - Water features that can run all winter...they become ice sculptures
 - ◇ Movement and light
 - **Rock Gardens...**done well with thoughtful plantings and right scale
2. **Movement:**
 - Wind in tree branches, grasses, bamboo
 - Birds at bird feeders bring motion and color
 - Kinetic sculpture

3. Light and shadow

- Refracted light and pattern
 - ◊ Cut glass windows, stained glass, mirrors
- Shadow patterns
 - ◊ cast by plants and trees on walls, snow, ground
 - ◊ Outdoor lighting for night time shadows...still bringing the outside in
- Fire features

4. Remodeling recommendations?! Enhance the views into the garden to bring the outside in...Sukiya living (Japanese garden principles)

- Addition of 3 or 4 season rooms extended into the garden area
 - ◊ **Change the way they live!**
- Window walls or low silled large windows towards the best views
- Pergolas, arbors with high level of design detail...architecturally appropriate
- Screened porch

Take Chances! Try something new. Tell others!

Some quotes from Albert Einstein:

- *In my experience, the best creative work is never done when one is unhappy*
- *Imagination is more important than knowledge*
- *Logic will take you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere*

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Bibliography and recognition

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i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi: Quotes from Booth & Hiss Residential Landscape Architecture – 5th edition

vii: Quote from Robin Templar Williams workshop

viii: Referenced from Richard Dubé Natural Pattern Forms