

CENTERPIECING TOGETHER YOUR GARDEN

Nearly everyone would like to dress up their garden with a fountain, a bench or a piece of statuary. But how do you know where to begin? The selection of pieces, shapes, styles and colors that are available today can be overwhelming.

And of course, when you're decorating your garden, just as when you're decorating a room inside your home, you want to know what's trendy and what's "last week," right? So to help with your decorating decisions, let's sort through the many modern and trendy options available in garden décor.

Indoors or out

The classics never go out of style. In fact, they've never been more in style. If you want to create a "Tuscan" or "Country French" look in your garden, here's where you start. It's easy to imagine a fountain or a statue of Bacchus as the center point of your garden.

Considerations:

- When purchasing a classical piece, it's fun to know something of its history to share with friends when they visit. Many pieces, such as Hermes or Venus, have interesting historical or mythological significance. (We'll soon discuss such significance.)
- A classic piece deserves a classic setting. For instance, if you want to install a classic Italianesque fountain as a centerpiece of your patio, don't just plunk it out there by itself. Buy three or four matching pots, plant them with herbs and use them to anchor the base of the fountain. You get the sound of water, the scent and texture of the herbs, plus their culinary use—three gardens in one.
- Think long term and buy a quality piece. The better manufacturers do such a good job constructing their pieces that they can become heirlooms you pass down to your children. Then your new classic will become a true classic.

The aged look

Smooth and shiny are trendy for certain purposes, but the big trend now: pieces that look as though they've been in your garden



for centuries. That birdbath might be constructed of durable fiberglass and be only a month old, but it has a patina that comes from decades of weathering the elements, complete with chips, stains and algae.

Considerations:

- Want instant age? A hammer will provide the chips (just don't get carried away). And a mixture of 1 qt. buttermilk, 1 cup of composted cow manure and 1 cup of crushed moss, brushed on, will produce an ancient-looking patina of moss in a matter of weeks (be prepared for a slightly unfavorable smell until the moss grows).

Urns

If garden ornaments are hot, then urns are the hottest of this hot category. What makes them so popular? For one, they fit all of the above categories—they're classics of the garden, and they often have that rustic, aged look that gardeners love. And they come in every size and finish imaginable. Additionally, they fit into nearly any garden décor.



Each issue, *Green Profit* organizes a ready-made class on livegood and hardgood topics in the form of a magazine page you can tear out, even giving it to customers who want questions answered, myths debunked and a reason to be in a garden environment, regardless of the season. You provide the customers and example products; we'll do the rest.

 Considerations:

- Urns are the ultimate multipurpose garden ornament: You can use a solitary specimen as a focal point, or you can use two to flank a doorway, gate or sidewalk. You can leave them unplanted and enjoy them for their own beauty, or you can plant them with your favorite annuals, perennials or evergreens.
- To make your urn or urns even more striking, set them up on a matching pedestal. The added height will lend a sense of drama to your display.
- Be bold and adventurous when planting your urns—there's no right or wrong. But a good rule of thumb is to use large, upright plants if your urn (or any container, for that matter) will be viewed from a distance. Use slightly smaller, more interesting plants if your urn will be enjoyed up close. For instance, ornamental grasses or neatly clipped evergreens will show up nicely even from 50 ft., whereas pansies or English ivy would be almost invisible at that distance.

Whimsy

We've talked a lot about classical designs and shapes. But be honest: How many of you admit to a fondness for gnomes, turtles and mushroom sculptures in your garden? That's quite all right; every garden can do with a bit of whimsy, which is what we'll talk about next. Remember that there are probably more styles and qualities of whimsical garden art than all the others combined, from molded plastic to hand-carved granite. You can enjoy the whimsy of a carved squirrel in your garden and not get a questioning look from your neighbors.

 Considerations:

- Small, whimsical statuary can be an inexpensive way to add personality to your garden and can be the centerpiece of a modest garden room or courtyard. They also make great gifts.
- To make a small piece such as a bird, turtle or frog stand out, set it in the top of a birdbath.

Historically Speaking

Bacchus: Known by the Greeks as Dionysus, Bacchus is the god of wine. He is also the god who granted King Midas the golden touch.

Venus: Known by the Greeks as Aphrodite, Venus is the goddess of love, beauty and fertility, as well as a protector of sailors.

Hermes: Known by the Romans as Mercury, Hermes was the messenger of the Greek gods. He wore winged sandals that allowed him to fly, as well as either a helmet of invisibility or a sun hat that reflected his protection to travelers, or a combination of the two. His staff is a willow twig with either ribbons or snakes entwined around it. He was smart, too, inventing the lyre when he was one day old.

Foo dogs: In Asia, Foo dog statues have long been used to guard entrances to homes and buildings. They also symbolize strength and energy.

Gazing balls: Believe it or not, they date back to 13th century Venice, where glass blowers created small spheres said to ward off witches. They're also thought to protect the owner from evil spirits, misfortune and illness, while bringing prosperity, happiness and good luck. A young woman gazing into a gazing ball will see her future husband.



This way, it won't get lost in your flowers, and it will add interest to your birdbath.

A splash of color

The aged look may be in, but for a splash of color, nothing beats a richly glazed pot. The combination of color and sheen can bring life to a dark, shady corner of your garden. They come in any color you can imagine, but popular hues include cobalt blue, red, gold, orange, purple and pale green.

 Considerations:

- Want to create a vacation resort on your patio? One aspect many tropical destinations have in common is the use of large glazed pots filled with tropical plants, such as sago palms, hibiscus or bougainvillea. Or add a topiary form or obelisk to the pot and twine a mandevilla or dipladenia vine up it.

Think in terms of groupings

Want to make your fountain more pleasurable? Put a garden bench next to it so you and your guests can enjoy the sound of water close up and in comfort. Or if you place a wall fountain on your patio, consider a pot or two underneath it to add to the effect. Most manufacturers offer a range of styles.

 Considerations:

- Short of the largest, splashiest fountain, pretty much any of the hardgoods we've looked at today can be used indoors as well as out. If you love the garden look, why relegate it to the outdoors? Try an urn in your entryway or a small statue in the corner of your dining room. A stone rabbit surrounded by flowers would make an unexpected centerpiece on a table.

In the end, when it comes to your garden, there's no wrong or right. It's all about doing what you enjoy. The only rules are to be bold, be confident and have fun. 🍃

—By Chris Beytes, with special thanks to Russell Ireland III, the garden statuary expert at Martin Viette Nursery, East Norwich, New York.