

GARDEN

S A N C T U A R Y

Designing for Comfort, Wholeness, and Connection

John Robert Beaudry

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO

MARY JANE MUELLER

My neighbor, Mary Jane Mueller was a wiry woman who wasn't afraid to get her hands in the dirt. She generally wore pants, always ready for work in the garden. She didn't have a husband, so I suppose she did much of the work around the house herself, especially work in her garden, which wrapped around her patio.

That garden was a mystery to me, full of intrigue. In my earliest years, I recall waiting for spring, when the plants, which had retreated into the earth for the long Midwest winter, began to sprout. As the days of spring grew longer, I voyaged to that garden to see if the plants had awakened from their sleep. Though Mary Jane's garden was only next door, to me it seemed like a very long trek. Weaving my way up the gentle hill, through the shrubbery between the yards, I made my way to that magical place.

Once at the garden, I would go to the places where, before the snow and cold had buried them, huge plants nearly as big as me, with long green and white leaves, had grown. I knew they were hiding now, deep inside the earth; I also knew they would be coming back soon. I watched for the purplish-red tips to peek out from the ground. And once those plants began to sprout, I knew it wouldn't be long before the garden would return. I loved watching those tiny, fragile tips grow into the massive green giants I knew them to be.

Mary Jane was patient with me and generous with her time. In the summer, when the garden was in its glory, I would ask her the names of the plants. But I could never remember them for long, so at my next visit, I'd have to ask again, and the next day, again. Mary Jane always answered with just as much patience and pride as the day before, as if it were the first time I asked.

I now see that my early experiences in Mary Jane's garden were the seeds of my passion for gardening, which has now become both my vocation and my avocation. It's funny how certain threads weave their way through life. This morning, I ventured out to my vegetable garden to look for sprouts from the seeds I had recently planted. The spinach is up now. So are the radishes and scallions. No coriander or carrots yet. I'll check back tomorrow to see who's come up from the mysterious earth.

P R E F A C E

The idea for this book came in 2001, when I was a senior horticulturist at the Chicago Botanic Garden. I was scheduled to present a class on the Arts and Crafts garden and had just completed the garden around my first bungalow. Freelance writer Nina Koziol wrote an article about that garden that ran on the cover of the *Chicago Tribune's* Sunday Home and Garden section the day before the class started. By Monday morning, my class had gone from twelve participants to more than a hundred. Literally overnight, I became the Arts and Crafts garden expert.

Patsy Benveniste, a beloved colleague at Chicago Botanic Garden, suggested I write a book on the subject. Over the next ten years, that original book concept became a tome of more than sixty thousand words with three main sections. Under the tutelage of John Brookes, the designer of Chicago Botanic's English Walled Garden, I researched everything I could find about the Arts and Crafts movement. I traveled throughout England and France studying the history of gardening. Then I traveled across the United States to photograph bungalows in historic neighborhoods. Some of those photos appear in this book.

My first manuscript consisted of three parts. The first part presented a history of the Arts and Crafts movement and how the bungalow became one of America's favorite homes. The second was a how-to garden design book in the Arts and Crafts style. The third part would feature bungalows in four regions across the US, highlighting the regional differences of climate and culture that make these regions and their bungalows unique.

The original manuscript, with the title *Bungalow Garden Design: How to Create Gardens and Lives Rooted in Spirit*, has gone through quite an evolution. Many coaches helped me through this progression. It was clear from speaking with a couple of publishers that the first order of

business in that evolution was to break the book up into three books. The book you are now reading is the middle section of my original manuscript. The second step was to trim my thirty-five-thousand-word description of the design process in half, making it more concise and cutting to the heart of my message: that we need nature and nature needs us, and that we can create healthy, harmonious environments where we thrive, side by side, with nature. The final step was to expand the book's focus away from just bungalows to make it relevant to a wider range of readers.

My mission was to clearly present the essential steps of the design process. All additional detail was moved to my website, <http://www.bungalowcommunity.com>, where you can dig deeper into the design process and share your journey with others on the same path.

Eighteen years later, *Garden Sanctuary: Designing for Comfort, Wholeness, and Connection* presents a brief history of the Arts and Crafts movement as a context for connecting to the spirit of life. It also constitutes a call to readers to discover the myriad benefits that nature has to offer us. My prayer is that you will take an interest in preserving all of nature, *including* humanity.

In this book, you will discover that nature is not something outside of ourselves. Rather, we are part of the whole of nature, one precious part of something much grander than ourselves. May this discovery provide you with the comfort, wholeness, and connection that we all so vitally need.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have guided me on my journey. The first was Patsy Benveniste, who inspired me to write the book. Patsy, you have always been an inspiration to me. Thank you for your vision. Soon after I began to write it, I realized that I had no idea what I was doing. I needed a coach. I turned to Amy Agape, who helped me understand how to write a book proposal. This process helped me organize the content of my book. It was Amy who told me that once I got going, the book would write itself. So it did. *Garden Sanctuary* has become much more than I ever thought it could be: a calling to unite with and for nature.

I experienced many yearlong disruptions in my work on *Garden Sanctuary*. Along my way, I met people who wanted to contribute. Shanna Trenholm was one of those people. Shanna hired me to help her with her garden sanctuary and took on coaching me through the first draft of *Garden Sanctuary*, which was then the middle section of a much longer manuscript. Shanna had me write what she called writing prompts, short stories about random ideas to get me out of my head and free up my writing style. My dedication of this book to Mary Jane Mueller was one of Shanna's writing prompts. The challenge was to write about an early childhood memory. Shanna also helped me set writing goals, track time spent writing, seek editorials in other publications, and more. Thank you for all your support, Shanna. Every writer needs someone like you.

I also want to thank Shiila Safer, who first suggested that the book be broken up into three books. Shiila helped me understand the importance of my book beyond what I had imagined it to be.

Then I met Helen Chang, author, ghostwriter, and founder of Author Bridge Media, a publishing company that "supports writers to bring forth stories that transform life on the planet." Helen

and her team presented a clear pathway to making *Garden Sanctuary* a reality.

I especially want to thank my editor at Author Bridge Media, Katherine MacKenett, who wielded the axe to halve the content of my original how-to design section. Katherine, I am grateful for your skillful attention to content that really mattered and for giving me the structure to make that content relevant to readers.

As Katherine took on the role of editorial director, Jenny Shipley and Julia Watson stepped in as my new editors. Jenny and Julia, you ensured that my readers understand why each step in the process matters.

Behind the scenes, Ivy Stirling, VP of author development, and Laurie Aranda, publishing manager, helped sort out all the details of book design, layout, and the nitty gritty of self-publishing. Thank you both for guiding me on a path I had no familiarity with.

The person for whom I am most grateful, is my husband, José Luís Cerdá, for his keen sense of grammar and linguistics. Luís, you helped me develop a writing style that is at once my own and structurally sound. I also thank you for your constant support through the countless hours I have spent, away from you, writing this book. Luís is my co-photographer for this book.

Finally, I acknowledge Mother Nature for being my ultimate muse. Nature was where I first discovered wonder. She continues to inspire, sustain, and revitalize me. In gratitude for her plentitude, I am donating ten percent of the proceeds for this book to the Pachamama Alliance. The Pachamama Alliance is a global community that offers people the chance to learn, connect, engage, travel, and cherish life for the purpose of creating a sustainable future that works for all. You can learn more about Pachamama in the appendix and at www.pachamama.org.



Planting a garden fulfills a human need to nurture.

INTRODUCTION

A SEPARATION CRISIS



Do you feel like you are running on a gerbil wheel, and you just can't get off? That if you keep going like this, you will wear out, lose your job, not be able to provide for your family? Is your health deteriorating? Do you find yourself short-tempered—not the good person you know yourself to be? Does life keep coming at you, leaving no place for *you*? Do you wish it would all just stop for a minute, so you could finally slow down?

Our lives are full of conflicting demands. You wake two hours before your alarm goes off in anticipation of your day, and you can't get back to sleep, so when morning comes, you are exhausted. While driving to work, your boss or client sends you a text. You know you shouldn't read it—*you*

could kill someone—but you're torn. What could be wrong now? Your heart races; the stress builds. Your son has practice at four o'clock, but your boss needs you to stay late. How will you keep up with it all? At night, you can't fall asleep because you're fearful you've left something critical at work undone.

We live in a fast-paced world. All the things that are supposed to make our lives easier—DocuSign, PayPal, texting, and those endless emails—have only sped up our lives, leaving us little time to slow down and re-energize. We're in a collective state of overwhelm from the business of life. Not only that, but we are disconnected from the natural environment: nature. We are part of nature, yet we feel separated from her—like she's over there, and we're over here.

Figure 1. Back side of a pink flowering maple. Abutilon species. Photo: José Luís Cerdá.

Because of this overwhelm and disconnection, we experience a sense of separation, aloneness, even depression. As our cities continue to grow, the amount of green space per capita is shrinking at an alarming rate. All the while, industry continues to use nature, calling it “natural resources.” But those, too, are running out.

Do you find yourself craving downtime? A place to escape? To connect? Do you wish you could walk out your door and be in a sacred place, surrounded by the restorative powers of nature? Maybe you have a backyard and want a garden to relax in but don't know how to go about creating it.

The fulfillment of a connection to nature is yours to have. You can make a declaration. Draw a line. Take a stand for yourself. Start by venturing into nature. Take time to sit, be still, and observe. Feel the energy of the natural environment. Let it fill you with its peace and harmony. Notice how plants grow in drifts or partner with one another. Open your senses. Smell the pine needles being crushed as you walk, the scents of flowers wafting in the air. Listen to the birdsongs. Feel the sun on your cheek. This awareness of the life around you is one of the first steps in the design process.

TRANSFORMATION

I will guide you in how to create your own personal sanctuary in your own backyard. By utilizing my design process, you will begin to discover how nature slows us down, regulates our heartbeat, and balances our hormones. In fact, David Strayer, a cognitive psychologist at the University of Utah studying nature's calming effect, said, “Our brains aren't tireless three-pound machines; they're easily fatigued. When we slow down, stop the busywork, and take in beautiful natural surroundings, not only do we feel restored, but our mental performance improves too.” Being in nature lifts our energy, enhances creativity, boosts our immune system, restores our focus, and makes us better people because we are calmer and more centered.

Imagine living in an environment in harmony with nature. Imagine enveloping ourselves in the rhythms and forms of nature. Consider the healing benefits that this connection would provide. Spending time in nature allows us to experience the wonderment of our existence with all our senses. Nature allows us to shift our attention beyond the business of our lives and to recognize that we are inextricably connected to the universe.

No doubt you feel intimidated about designing your garden, especially if you've never done this before. Take solace. I will show you how to connect with your inner design sense. We all have this innate sense of creativity. It simply needs to be nourished.

Garden Sanctuary presents a comprehensive explanation of the design process. Unlike many garden design books that feature pretty pictures and flowery text, *Garden Sanctuary* distills the design process into a series of concrete steps that you—whether an average homeowner or a practiced garden designer—can use to create exquisite gardens in harmony with your environment.

These steps will guide you through the process of transforming your yard, your garden, into a personal sanctuary that is in harmony with nature. Your new garden will be flooded with birds, butterflies, and perhaps even the sound of flowing water. You will feel yourself relaxing, your body being regulated, whole in the arms of nature.

MY JOURNEY

With a bachelor of science degree in ornamental horticulture from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I have been professionally designing and installing gardens for thirty-five years. I've helped hundreds of people create gardens that allow them to experience the wonder of nature in their own backyards. In 2016, I was the recipient of a silver medal for a walking



Figure 2. This photo of Chicago Botanic Garden's Great Basin shows how created landscapes can re-create nature in what was previously a bulldozed landscape. Landscapes like this one inspired me as a child. Photo by author. Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, IL

meditation garden through the International Association of Professional Landscape Designers. I received a bronze medal from the same association for the garden featured in this book.

In addition to my work with private individuals, I worked with organizations such as the Chicago Department of Environment. There, I coordinated Brownfield redevelopment projects, helped design Chicago's first rooftop garden on City Hall, and managed Mayor Richard M. Daley's landscape awards program and a program called Greencorps Chicago, the City of Chicago's green job training program for individuals with barriers to employment.

I was also senior horticulturist for the Chicago Botanic Garden, where, in addition to managing

ten unique gardens, I collaborated with one of the nation's top design firms, Oehme van Sweden, to implement one of its largest landscape projects to date: the Gardens of the Great Basin at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

I was fortunate to have grown up in a wooded forest in a suburb of Chicago. We were surrounded by nature, both wilderness and landscaped gardens. Inspired by the garden of my neighbor, Mary Jane Mueller, I asked for my own garden at the age of five. When I went to college, I knew that ornamental horticulture was for me. I've had an incredible career in creating outdoor spaces that provide people with an intimate connection to nature. In every place I have lived, I have created this connection for myself. Designing and

building gardens are both my vocation and my avocation. I love what I do, and I do what I love. I have a great life.

However, when I graduated from college in 1982, I had little confidence in myself as a designer. I got a job at the park district making \$10,000 per year. I had roommates who graduated in computer science who were making \$40,000. I was embarrassed to be making so little money, even after having gone to college. I felt like I had chosen the wrong career, but I knew I couldn't do anything else.

My low self-esteem led me to become a party boy. My life was focused on looking good and living beyond my means. In 1985, at the age of twenty-five, I was diagnosed as HIV positive. It was a death sentence. At that time, there was nothing that could be done. Everyone died. I embraced dying, yet I did everything I could think of to live. I stopped drinking. I got out of an abusive relationship and filed bankruptcy. I decided that, if I had only a few years left, I was going to enjoy what little time I had.

As my blood numbers deteriorated, so did my health. I embraced spirituality. I lived life to the fullest . . . and waited for the axe to fall. But I also gave up the idea of a career—any aspirations of ever being somebody. I felt like I got what I deserved because I was gay. I didn't even understand what that was. It just seemed like the wrong thing to be, a bad choice. Yet I had no choice. I had a deep self-loathing and a deep sense of not belonging.

By 1994, that axe showed up. I developed a sinus infection that lasted five months. I had IV infusions of antibiotics every day for months and then surgery on my sinuses. I developed severe bronchial asthma followed by pneumonia. I said good-bye to my family, wrote my will, and, with the help of my family, bought a house that would accommodate a live-in nurse.

That same year, protease inhibitors came out. Protease inhibitors, when combined with AZT, the only other drug that had been available to treat

HIV, formed “the cocktail.” My body responded miraculously to the cocktail. Within a month, I was double-stepping up stairs and gaining my energy back. It wasn't long before I realized that HIV or AIDS was not going to kill me.

The house that I bought was my first bungalow. It had a crummy little backyard that I couldn't wait to tear up and reinvent. That garden became a place of healing and restoration for me. There was something about having my hands in the dirt, working with plants, that made me feel whole. My garden was the place I felt I belonged. It gave me space for contemplation: Why me? Why have I survived while so many friends and strangers have died? Why was I spared? Why am I here? What do I have to contribute? What is my purpose?

For the next twenty years, I continued to pursue many forms of spirituality. I moved to New York to take the Foundation Studies yearlong program at the Rudolf Steiner Institute. I did the ManKind Project's New Warrior Training Adventure. I took classes with the Human Awareness Institute, studied shamanism, and became a Reiki master.

Slowly, it came to me. My connection to nature was my gift to share. Nature brought me solace. It stabilized me when my life felt out of control. I discovered that I *am* nature, that my relationship to her was not a relationship to anything outside myself. It was more like a relationship with a part of me—the heart of me. I discovered that we are one with nature: one petal of a many-petalled flower.

I am here; I survived to share this message with you. As humans, we are part of the whole of life, not separate from it. Developing a relationship with nature and spending time in a garden gives us a sense of belonging, of being connected to the whole of life.

Your garden will provide you with your own personal connection to nature. I ask you to trust in nature and to be forgiving of yourself. Pledge

to me that you will never say, “I don’t have a green thumb.”

With this book, we—you and I together—will go through the journey of creating a magical garden where you will find your wholeness, your home within your own heart. It will always be there for you whenever you need it to slow and ground yourself.

It is a fabulous journey, and I am excited to share it with you!

YOUR JOURNEY

In this book, I will take you through a step-by-step journey for conceiving your personal sanctuary. Before you begin your journey, I suggest that you read the entire book. To achieve anything, it is important to know not only your goal, but also how you are going to achieve it. By reading the whole book first, you will understand the process and the end product. As you read, you will find inspiration and form ideas about what you want to create. I suggest that you keep a design journal to capture these musings. Every time you find inspiration, make a note in your journal.

Once you have completed reading the book, you can use it as a guide as you move through the exciting process of creating your own personal sanctuary. You will find that the process of creating a garden is a satisfying and transformative experience. I know this to be true, because this is what people tell me over and over again.

MY PROMISE TO YOU

I can promise this transformation because I have seen it happen again and again. Planting Justice, in Oakland, California, is just one example of the transformation that is possible by connecting people with nature. In a neighborhood without a grocery store and no access to healthy, organic food, Planting Justice trains formerly incarcerated individuals to build edible gardens throughout one of the most dangerous and

deprived neighborhoods in the country. At the time of writing this book, the nonprofit has created more than 450 gardens for prisons, juvenile detention facilities, schools, churches, and private homes in the San Francisco Bay Area. Planting Justice has 0 percent recidivism and is planning to purchase a two-acre parcel of land to build a permaculture plant nursery and an aquaponics farm and training center. These facilities will provide food for the community and continue to transform the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals and the communities they serve.

Planting Justice is one example of how working with plants causes transformation. An eighty-year-old woman told me she “had learned to see again” after taking my pruning class. No age limit exists for getting connected to nature and reaping the benefits she offers us.

By following the steps in this book, you will create a space that calls you to engage with it. In this space, and in as little as ten minutes, your energy will shift, and your body and mind will slow down. You will feel centered and at peace.

Are you ready to find your connection to nature? She will be your lifeline. You, too, can discover the joy, peace, and harmony that nature provides, not only out in the wild, but just outside your door, only a few steps away whenever you need it.

In the next chapter, I will explain the principles of Arts and Crafts garden style in detail. These principles form the foundation for the naturalistic style of landscape I embrace in this book.

This style arose out of the Arts and Crafts movement’s quest for the spirit of life. That is why these principles will help you to transform your yard into much more than just a garden. They will help you to create places to entertain, to spend time with family, and to live life in relationship with the natural world. It is here, within the rhythms of nature, where we find the connection to our source.

Are you ready to begin your journey? Let’s go!



When we work with plants, we see with new eyes: a new world is manifest.

CHAPTER 1

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF ARTS AND CRAFTS STYLE



OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I will explain the principles of Arts and Crafts style. The style arose out of a fifty-year-plus quest for regaining what we collectively lost—the spirit of life—when we transitioned from an agrarian lifestyle to work in factories. These principles point to the way out of our fast-paced world full of conflicting demands.

To truly embrace these principles would be to spend time in, and with, nature. Go to the park for lunch. Take a walk at sunset. Notice what you walk by every day and see it newly. This is the spirit of life the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement sought.

If you skip this chapter, you will rob yourself of the true gift of this book. These principles are style makers. They shape the style of the kind of gardens that evoke comfort, wholeness, and connection.

My quest for a sense of wholeness and connection led me to my own backyard. It was there, with my hands in the earth and my nose buried in blossoms, that I found my connection to the spirit of life. The process of designing and creating a garden grounded me in the rhythms of nature and freed me from my worries and concerns.

Figure 3. Flower petals in a bowl. Photo: José Luís Cerdá.

I am not alone in this quest.

The Arts and Crafts movement began in England in the mid-1800s. Its founders understood the value of having a relationship with nature. They said we should use our own hands to craft our goods from natural materials, that a “good life” came from a hand-to-nature connection. They concluded that this connection to the natural environment had been severed when people abandoned their previous agrarian lifestyle for a “better life” working in city factories.

I agree.

Collectively, we have been separated from nature. Cut off. Many of us are living without a speck of green in sight. Unless we have some

small plot of earth to put our hands in, we, too, have lost our connection to the spirit of life.

The Arts and Crafts movement was essentially a rebellion against the tyranny that the industrial age had inflicted on its workforce, including the loss of the crafts guilds—blacksmithing, masonry, goldsmithing, and the like—and the cheap products that were made in the newly established factories.

Prior to the industrial age, 90 percent of the population lived an agrarian lifestyle. Some were lucky enough to learn a trade and be part of a guild. In either case, they had a keen relationship to crafting from nature. People’s lives revolved around the seasons: planting, tending, harvesting, and processing the crops. The guildsmen crafted natural products into works of art.



Figure 4. In this garden, curved steps soften the harshness of the urban environment’s square lines. The curves also reflect curved bay windows in the house. The rounded tops of the trellises play off the same theme and work to integrate the whole landscape. Photo by Author. Private garden, Chicago, Illinois.

However, life was not easy. Crops failed. People died of scurvy, influenza, typhoid, and famine. The factories promised a better life in the city. A guaranteed wage. A roof over their heads. It was tempting for people to leave their old lives and move to the city. But the factories became a horrible place to work. Women and children worked long hours and made barely enough money to pay for the housing the factory owners rented to them.

In addition, the coal that fueled machinery in the factories produced so much air pollution that visibility was poor. Sanitation was horrible. Children played in streets that were littered with garbage and rodents. People had lost their relationship to the renewing cycles of nature.

The ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement spread from Europe to the United States like wildfire. The movement emerged as a new style, the Craftsman style, distinct from the contemporary Federalist style found all over the eastern US coast. Out of this style, the Arts and Crafts garden arose.

The Arts and Crafts garden is reflective of its environment, expressing the architecture and the environment surrounding it. Moreover, it has distinct connections to the people who interact with and live in it.

No matter what style you are drawn to, the pillars of Arts and Crafts design add strength to a garden. They transform spaces into much more than simply a garden. They help create places to entertain, to spend time with family, and to live life in relationship with the natural world. It is here, in the rhythms of the natural world, where we find connection to our true nature.

The seven pillars of Arts and Crafts design, which can be applied to any style of garden, are as follows:

- Unify the house and garden.
- Use nature as a primary source of inspiration.
- Use local materials and plants.
- Use relaxed plantings.

- Enclose the garden and its rooms.
- Integrate the existing landscape.
- Include edible plants.

UNIFY THE HOUSE AND GARDEN

The first principle of Arts and Crafts style is to unify house and garden—extend the living spaces of your home outdoors and create rooms outside where you can live in the loving arms of nature. Inside your home, choose color palettes that are inspired by nature.

Unity of house and garden is the primary tenet of the Arts and Crafts movement. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, nature was viewed as dangerous, something to be avoided or controlled. The Arts and Crafts movement embraced nature and recognized our connection to her. As the noise, crowds, and pollution of industrial cities grew, nature began to be recognized as beneficial, even necessary, for good health. While doctors began to promote fresh air as an antidote to tuberculosis and iron lung disease, domestic reformers such as Catharine Beecher and Andrew Jackson Downing extolled the moral virtues of country living, where the home became a sanctuary from the evils and stresses of life in the city.

This trend of embracing nature led to a desire to extend the living area of the house outside. Gustav Stickley and other architects who were inspired by the movement designed homes with open front porches and sleeping porches off bedrooms, where children would sleep during the warmer months, all to gain access to fresh air from outside. They designed pergolas and arbors—often planted with wisteria, clematis, and climbing roses—to extend the home into the garden. These features were typically handcrafted and often combined rustic carpentry with wrought iron, ceramic tiles, or other features that related to the local vernacular.

In addition to extending the home into the garden, nature was reflected inside the house. In *Color Problems: A Practical Manual for the Lay*



Figure 5. This outdoor room is shaped by the overhead pergola. The size of the space relates to the sizes of the interior rooms. Relaxed plantings and irregular flagstone soften the rectilinearity of the space. Photo by Author. Private garden, San Diego, California.

Student of Color, author Emily Noyes Vanderpoel (1842–1939) offered a simple color palette taken from the Vermont woods in winter as a recommendation for decorating the interior of the home. Using simple palettes like this bring the soft caress of nature into the home.

Highly decorated and carved Victorian woodwork and furniture was replaced with simpler designs that highlighted the natural beauty of the raw materials. As opposed to the Victorian penchant for collecting exotic goods from far and wide, everything that went into the Arts and Crafts home celebrated the beauty of nature’s raw materials.

Figure 6. This plate from *Color Problems: A Practical Manual for the Lay Student of Color* by Emily Noyes Vanderpoel, published in 1902, presents a study of the colors of the winter landscape. In the book, Vanderpoel suggests using these colors in the interior of the home to unify house and garden.



USE NATURE AS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

The second pillar of Arts and Crafts style is to use nature as a primary source of inspiration. Be inspired by nature. Venture to the woods, the desert, the ocean, or a lake near you. Arts and Crafts gardens feel like the natural environment that surround them. Be inspired by nature rather than insistent on controlling her. Instead of the rigid lines of Victorian gardens, let plants spill beyond their boundaries.



Figure 7. The wide, sweeping lines of the river and surrounding landscape show us how to use lines in the landscape. These shapes in nature serve as inspiration for us as designers. Photo by author. Dead Horse Point State Park, Utah.

Do away with formal patterns and artificial color palettes in favor of organic forms and a painterly approach to gardening. A garden should be an extension of nature. It should arise out of the local environment. Rather than planting flowers in rows, choose naturalistic drifts. As the English designer John Brookes once directed me when I worked at the Chicago Botanic Garden, “Don’t

plant them like a parks person; plant them as if God planted them!”

Spend time in nature. She will inspire you. I recommend two places to find this inspiration. Find a nature preserve or rural area that has not been touched by the hands of progress. In this setting, you will experience the feel and mood of the natural landscape around you.

Second, go to a botanic garden or an arboretum that seeks to preserve the natural appearance of the land and plants. A botanic garden is one of the best places to see mature specimens of plants

that will perform well in your region. Observing mature specimens will give you a perspective on the potential size to which a plant will grow.

Knowing how big a plant can grow will help you to avoid the common mistake of planting that cute little two-gallon saucer magnolia next to your front door, only to have it swallow up your house as it matures.

USE LOCAL MATERIALS AND PLANTS

The third principle of Arts and Crafts style is to use local plants and materials. This principle goes beyond the current “buy local” trend. Using local plants helps to preserve local flora that may be threatened by the encroachment of civilization. Using local stone and other materials will make your garden feel like it belongs to the place where you live.

To the eyes of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement, the rise of the industrial revolution brought an ever-increasing homogenization of society and culture. Factories churned out goods that were cheap imitations of products formerly handmade by artisans. These craftspeople—and their crafts—began to be replaced by the factories and the inferior products produced by them.

Artisans each had unique styles that imparted regionality and local identity: place names, local dialects, foods, beers, architectural styles, and more. The Arts and Crafts movement sought to preserve this local identity, which was being homogenized by the machine.



Figure 8. These column bases were crafted from local stones. Using local materials evokes our connection to nature. Private garden, Oceanside, California.

We see the effects of the mass production on gardens today. Post-war gardens of the 1940s and 1950s featured European hybrid plants that were hybridized for uniformity. Simply drive from New York to California and witness the

number of suburban homes that have nearly identical landscapes with junipers, yews, or boxwood as the obligatory house moustache. Add in your occasional azalea, barberry, dogwood, holly, or hydrangea, and that about covers this homogenous palette.



Figure 9. Locally made tiles on this wall help root the landscape in its place by serving as a link to the people around us. Photo by author. Private garden, Oceanside, California.

Periodicals such as *Better Homes and Gardens* featured simplistic concepts for the application of foundation plants to the front of the home. When I took landscape design in the early 1980s, my instructor insisted that flower gardens were not appropriate for the front of the house, which he said should be subdued and serve only as an accent to the architecture.

This philosophy of cookie-cutter landscapes ignores the incredible diversity of plant species that are locally available in any given area. The use of plants that are native to a region adds to the unique character of the place. Similarly, the use of local stone and wood for structures in the garden, also called the hardscape, helps to integrate the house with its surroundings.

Today, a new naturalistic style is arising in garden design, sometimes referred to as the New Perennial style. This style originated in the early 1980s in the Netherlands. The essence of the New Perennial style is “rewilding” our urban spaces by using native or near-native plants and grasses that contribute to local biodiversity. Designer Piet Oudolf, a preeminent figure in this movement, designed New York’s High



Figure 10. This garden has a rigid structure (straight lines and cut stone), yet the plantings soften the lines, creating the sensation of a room outside with the relaxed feeling of nature. Photo by author. Author's garden, Chicago, Illinois.

Line gardens and Chicago's Lurie Garden. These gardens are rewilding our urban spaces.

USE RELAXED PLANTINGS

The fourth principle of Arts and Crafts style is to use relaxed plantings. Let plants spill beyond their boundaries. Plant in drifts of color as opposed to rows. You can plant relaxed, cottage-style plantings within a structure that defines your garden rooms. In the New Perennial style, the preference is for non-hybridized plants, sometimes called heirloom plants, that have a wilder feel.

Many new plant varieties are bred for bigger flowers or to be compact, so they fit into small spaces. Multiple recent scientific studies have shown that natural-shaped, rather than horticulturally modified, varieties of garden plants provide more pollen and nectar for foraging insects. Hybrids often appear stiff and unnatural. Native and non-hybridized plants attract more bees and butterflies and contribute to a greater diversity overall. These

plants also contribute to the relaxed look and feeling of comfort that you want for your garden sanctuary.

In contrast to the predictable American foundation plantings, let your plants ramble over the house and garden structures. Doing so will soften the architecture and contribute to the unity of house and garden. Many Arts and Crafts-style homes were equipped with trellises and pergolas for vining plants, brackets for window boxes, and ledges for planters. If your home does not have these features, consider adding them.

ENCLOSE THE GARDEN AND ITS ROOMS

The fifth principle of Arts and Crafts style is to enclose the garden and its rooms. Make your garden your own. Give yourself privacy for solitude or intimate moments with your family.

The idea of enclosing a garden is not new. In fact, the word *garden* evolved from the idea of

an earthly paradise as early as 500 BC, during the Persian Empire. The Latin word *pairi-daêza* literally means a walled enclosure. It was later shortened to *parideiza* and, ultimately, paradise.

How appropriate. Your garden should be your paradise.

Although the idea of dividing a garden into “rooms” has woven its way into popular landscape design culture, the concept is as old as the concept of garden enclosure. Organizing the garden by dividing it into separate and distinct areas was an idea that designer Gertrude Jekyll regularly used. In some instances, she planted the rooms of gardens by season, with each room highlighting plants that looked best for that season. In others, she organized rooms by color. The Sissinghurst Castle Garden in England is an excellent example of this technique.

Your garden may not be large enough to create totally separate rooms, but you can still find ways to organize and divide space to make each part feel special. Even a modest bathroom has distinct

areas for different purposes: a vanity for washing, a shower, a commode, storage. You get the idea. If you are reading this book, surely your garden is at least as large as your bathroom!

As we will see later in this book, most homes have a sense of order to them that can easily be extrapolated to the garden. The rooms of a garden should have a direct relationship to the proportion and layout of the rooms of the house. Garden rooms can serve many purposes. Like the rooms of your home, some of the rooms of your garden will be more public, say, for entertaining. Some will be functional, like the storage or compost area. Hopefully, you will have an area dedicated to growing food, and others will be more private.

You are embarking on the process of creating your personal sanctuary, your own private and protected space, in and enclosed by nature, where you can disconnect from the world of the machine and root into the womb of nature, your own soul.

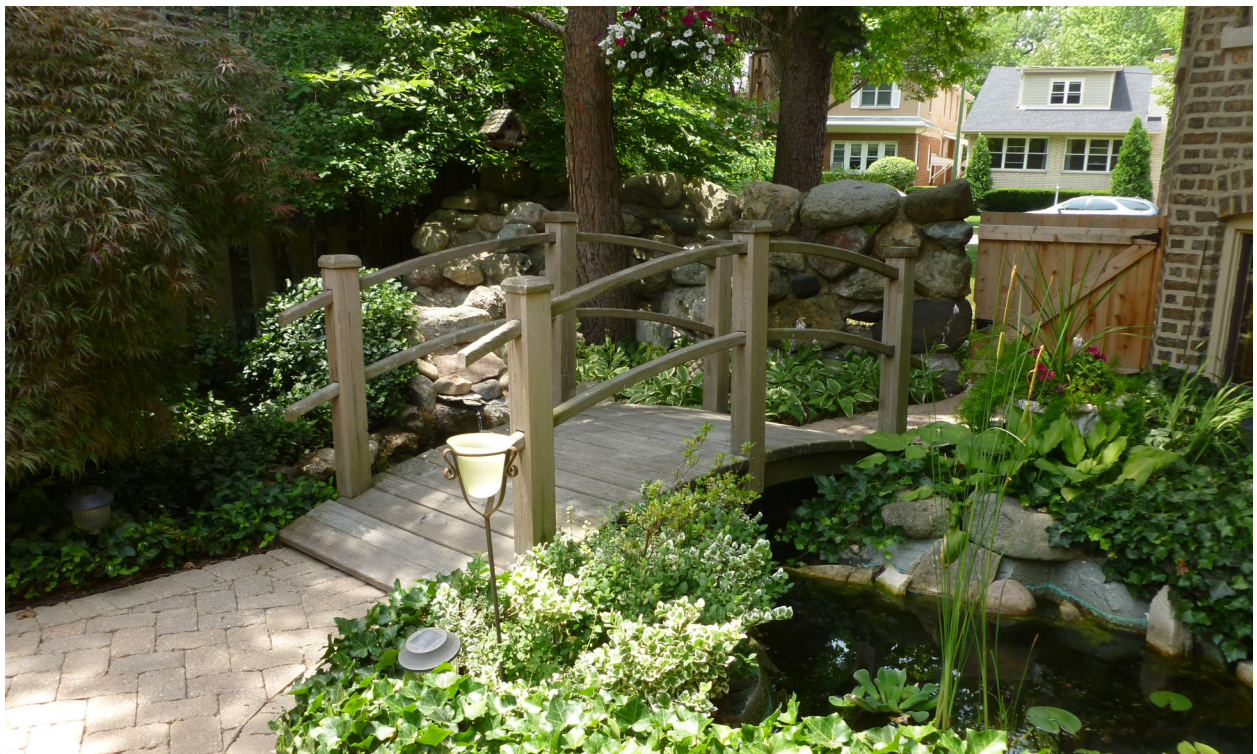


Figure 11. The rustic wall enclosing the side yard of this garden creates a sanctuary from the business of life. Photo by author. Private garden, Chicago, Illinois.



Figure 12. This recently landscaped backyard would not be the same if the designer had removed the mature trees. When designing a new landscape, retaining some of the mature plants will give the new landscape the feeling of being more established. Photo by author. Private garden, La Mesa, CA.

INTEGRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

The sixth principle of Arts and Crafts style is to integrate the existing landscape. Evaluate your existing landscape. Determine what plants you may want to keep. Keeping at least some of your original plantings will help make your new landscape look lived in, not so raw and new. We must honor the past while sustaining the future.

In the US, we have a strong tendency to dispose of what is old, wipe the slate clean, and start over. Out with the old and in with the new, as the saying goes. We see the trend in the “McMansions,” a term described on Wikipedia as being “generally used to denote a multistory house of no clear architectural style, with a larger footprint than existing homes and either located in a newer, larger subdivision or replacing an existing, smaller structure in an older neighborhood.” The phrase “totally remodeled”

in real estate listings often means stripped of all the original woodwork, built-ins, and cabinets—stripped of all charm.

INCLUDE EDIBLE PLANTS

The seventh principle of Arts and Crafts style is to include edible plants. What could better support the spirit of life than having the ability to eat fresh produce directly from your garden? Have you ever had the opportunity to eat a tomato straight off the vine, still warm from the sun? Well, you can!

Growing food at home is as American as apple pie. There was a time in our country when it was considered patriotic to grow your own food. People were encouraged to plant vegetable gardens. They called them victory gardens, or “food gardens for defense.” People planted them in their own yards as well as on public land during World War I and World War II to reduce pressure on the public food supply brought on by the war. Victory gardens

produced as much as 41 percent of all the vegetable produce that was consumed in the nation.

Today's political and social challenges are far different from those of the early twentieth century. The war-era victory gardens were a tangible way for Americans to participate in the most pressing issue of the time—supporting the country's role in the world war. Today, the most pressing needs are responding to the silent social and ecological crisis we all face—the challenge of creating more self-reliant, ecologically sound, and socially just urban human habitat.

Supporters of the Arts and Crafts movement understood social justice—the idea that every person deserves the right to healthy, fresh, locally available food; medical care; and a clean environment. By participating in growing our own food, we empower ourselves by providing ourselves and our families with what we each deserve.

Rather than relegating fruit trees to the orchard, which most people don't have space for, I like to include them as part of the landscape. Why not allow that specimen tree to be an apricot?

Now that you understand the principles of Arts and Crafts style, it is time to learn the language of design. By learning the terminology of the design world, you will be able to articulate why you like what you like and don't like in what you see around you. The language of design gives us a foundation from which to create. We call this foundation the fundamentals of design. The fundamentals of design are organized as the elements and principles of design.

In the next two chapters, I will introduce you to the elements and principles of design and why their use is important when it comes to creating any work of art.

The elements of design are the visual components we design with. Anything we create is made of these components.

The principles of design are the ways designers use the elements of design to create a unique experience for the viewer, or in our case, the visitor



Figure 13. One of the best ways to feel connected to nature is to be able to walk out to your garden to pick food for the table. Planting food crops in a garden is a sure way to get grounded. Photo by author. Author's garden, La Mesa, CA.

to your garden. In a garden, the viewer of the art becomes the doer. The viewer of a garden is called into it, to move through it.

Like learning any new language, a whole new world of expression opens for you. From what you discover by learning these fundamentals, you may be able to see the world with new eyes—from a different perspective. You don't want to skip over learning about the fundamentals of design. They are the ground floor of creating a garden. We will start learning about the elements of design in the next chapter.