

# Designing Perennial Gardens

Larry A. Sagers

Horticulture Specialist

Utah State University Extension

# Flower Garden Design Tips

- Keep These Flower Garden Design Tips In Mind When You're Planning A New Garden Bed Or Thinking About Adding To Your Existing Plantings



# The Trend Today Is To Plant A "Mixed Border"





# You Do Not Need To Segregate Perennials In Their Own Flowerbed





# Arrange Small Trees And Shrubs With Flowers





# Perennials Play An Important Function In Landscape Design







Perennials Provide A Broad Variety Of  
Color, Form And Flower Types  
Unavailable In Annual Flowers



# Most Perennials Have Relatively Short Bloom Periods





A photograph of a lush perennial garden bed. The foreground and middle ground are filled with numerous purple globe alliums (Echinops) on tall, thin stems. Interspersed among them are several bright yellow daisies. The plants are growing in front of a red brick wall. In the background, there are tall green grasses and other foliage. The overall scene is vibrant and colorful.

A Well-Designed Perennial Bed, Planted  
With A Variety Of Plant Species, Can  
Provide Continuous Bloom From Spring  
Through Fall



# PERENNIAL FLOWER BED DESIGN





# Why Design At All?

Designing A Perennial Flower Garden And  
Seeing It Develop Before Your Eyes Is  
Very Rewarding

# Plans Take Time, Knowledge And Experience To Prepare





# Impatient Gardeners Often Overlook The Planning Stage



# The Eye Needs A Sense Of Order





# This Makes A Haphazard Collection Of Plant Materials



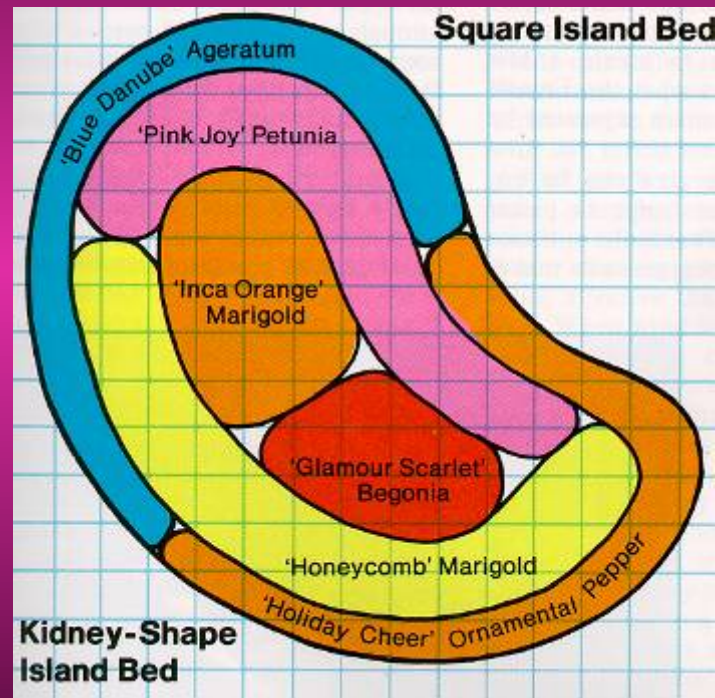


# Too Many Sizes, Shapes, Colors And Textures Create Confusion



The Most Spectacular Gardens All Begin  
With Carefully Thought-Out Designs With  
Strong Lines And Structure

# Step By Step Design





# Step #1 Determine The Point(S) Of Viewing.





# Place Beds Where They Are Readily Seen And Admired





# Locate Them In High Visibility Areas





# The Front Yard





# Near Windows



# The Porch Or Patio





# Three Types Of Perennial Gardens

- The Border
- The Island Bed
- The Naturalized Area

# A Border Bounds A Lawn, Walkway, Driveway Or Wall





Keep A Pleasing  
Relationship Between  
The Depth Of The  
Border And The Size  
Of The Yard



Keep It Under One-Quarter Of The  
Total Width Of Your Yard





# An Island Bed Is Surrounded By An Open Expanse





**It Is Accessible From All Sides,  
Making It Easier To Maintain**





**It Allows More Sunlight And  
Encourages Better Air Circulation**





# This Type Of Display Can Break Up Large, Open Areas



# You Do Not Need To Segregate Perennials In The Garden





# Naturalize Perennials In Dry Meadows Or Along Streams





# Use Wildflowers And Shrubs In Natural Locations



# Make Them A Part Of The Natural Landscape





# Some Can Be Naturalized In Grasses Or Ground Covers





# Many Are Used As Ground Covers





# Step #2 Consider Existing Conditions



# Consider Soil Type, Drainage, Wind, Pests, Ph And Light





# Consider The Space Limitations Of The Site





# Match Soil Type, Light Levels And Site Climate To The Plants





# Location Takes Into Account The Amount Of Sun Or Shade



# Location Takes Into Account The Amount Of Water Required





# Consider Plant Characteristics And The Garden Character





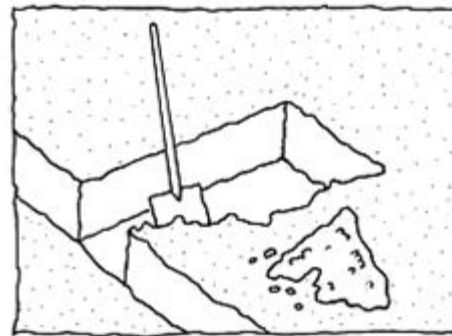
## **Preparing the Perennial Planting Bed**

- Soil test**
- Loosen soil 6-8” deep**
- Add organic matter**
- Work in fertilizer or amendments based on soil test**
- Crown or slope bed to provide drainage and improve display**

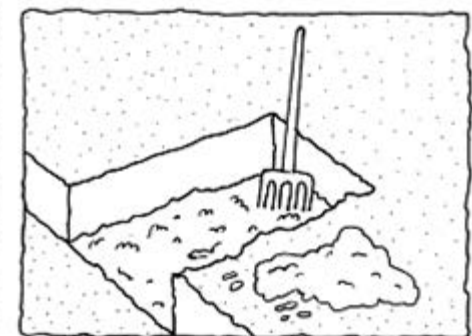


# Double Digging

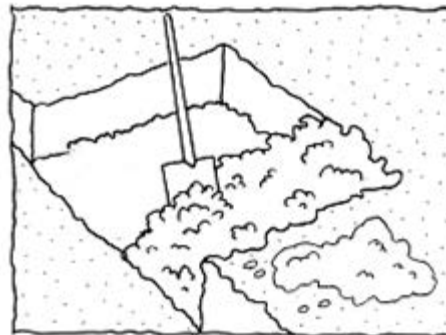
## Preparing and Amending Soil for an Annual or Perennial Bed



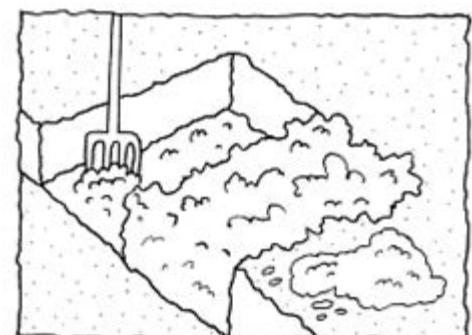
A. DIG FIRST TRENCH; PILE SOIL ALONGSIDE TRENCH OR INTO WHEELBARROW



B. BREAK UP BOTTOM OF TRENCH WITH FORK AND WORK IN SOME COMPOST



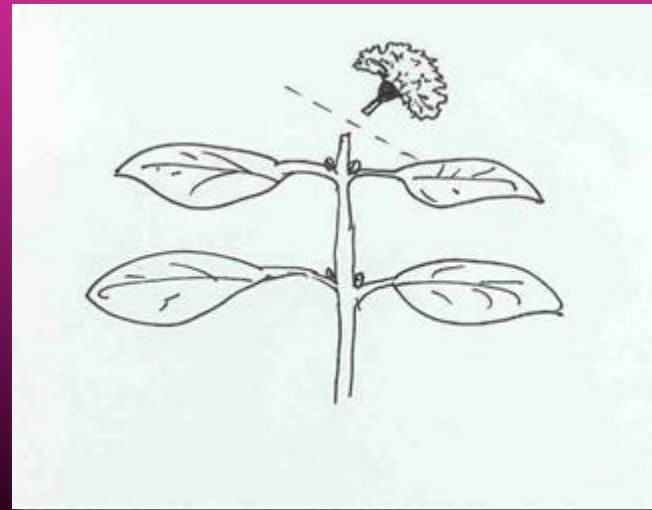
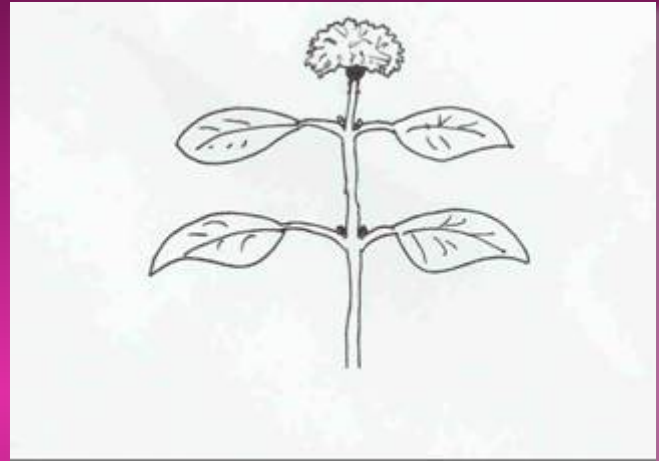
C. DIG SECOND TRENCH; PLACING SOIL INTO FIRST TRENCH



D. CONTINUE IN THIS MANNER; FILL LAST TRENCH WITH SOIL FROM FIRST TRENCH

# Herbaceous Plants

**Deadheading is removing flowers after they start to fade and BEFORE seeds mature. It encourages more blooms.**





## Dividing Perennials

- Helps keep bed from looking overcrowded
- Invigorates older plants that may be dying out in the center
- Makes new friends—because you can give away or trade plants

# Herbaceous Plants

## Dividing Perennials

- Divide spring blooming perennials in fall
- Divide summer and fall blooming perennials in spring



- **Dividing clumps such as daylilies . . .**

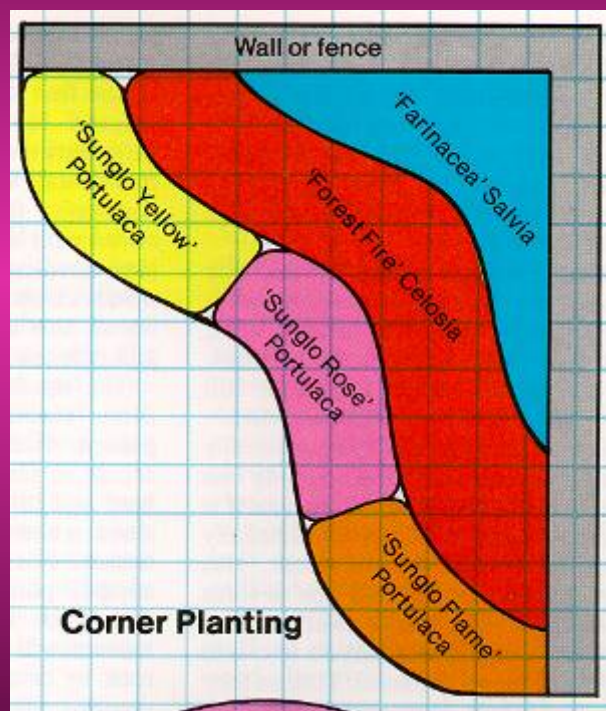


# Hosta





# Step #3: Using Graph Paper, Sketch The Garden Layout



# Decide On Style - Either Informal Or Formal.





# Informal Follows The Terrain With Curved, Flowing Lines







It Creates Balance Without Being  
Symmetrical And Highlights Existing And  
Future Plant Specimens



# Formal Uses Straight Lines To Outline The Shape Of The Bed





It Uses Symmetry To Match The  
Sides Of The Garden





# The Rectangular Shape Repeat Other Architectural Elements



These Include The House, Pool,  
Lawn Or Patio





# Most Style Decisions Are A Matter Of Personal Preference



# Here Are A Few Points To Consider:





# Informal Design

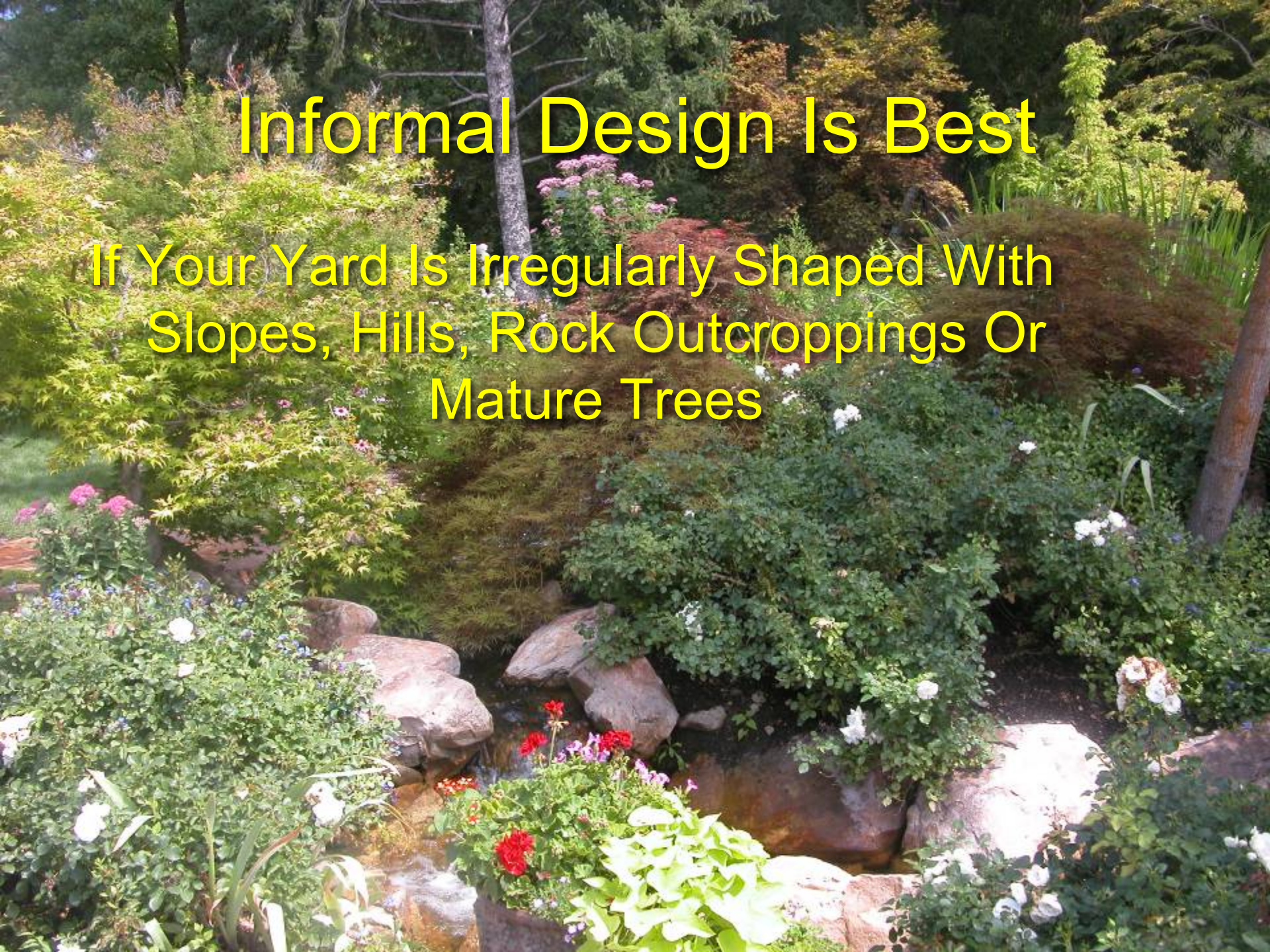
If Your Property Has No Outstanding Natural Features And Is Relatively Flat, Use Either Style





# Informal Design Is Best

If Your Yard Is Irregularly Shaped With  
Slopes, Hills, Rock Outcroppings Or  
Mature Trees





A single-story brick house with a grey shingled roof and a brick chimney. The front yard is filled with lush greenery, including a large rose bush with pink and white flowers on the left, a small tree in the center, and various other shrubs and flowers. A brick patio leads to the front door, which is flanked by windows with white shutters. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Consider The Style Of The House And  
Select The Style Of Garden That Will  
Complement It Best



# Step #4: Flower Bed Size





# Gardeners Often Skimp On The Width Of Their Beds



# Make Your Flower Beds Wide Enough To Begin With





# This Allows You To Add Shrubs And Trees



# Flower Borders May Be Of Any Width





In A Small Yard The Bed May  
Be Only 2 Or 3 Feet Wide



# In Spacious Gardens, Borders May Be 6-8 Feet Wide





**Wider Beds - At Least Five To Six Feet Wide -  
Are More Attractive And Give More Planting  
Opportunities For Creating A Lush, Layered  
Look**





# Use Stepping Stones To Work Deep Borders





This Gives Access To The Flowers  
Without Compacting The Soil



# Locate The Front Edge Back Enough For Easy Lawn Mowing





# Limit Plant Height To $\frac{2}{3}$ The Width Of The Border





# Use Plants Less Than 4 Feet In A Border 6 Feet Wide





# Every Garden Bed Needs Sense Of Definition



Do Not Underestimate  
The Power Of The  
Line That Sets The  
Bed Apart From The  
Rest Of The Garden





# Straight Lines Work Well, But Curved Lines Are Preferable



# Design Gentle Curves Not Wiggly Lines

- Smooth Sweeping Curves Or Even Clean Straight Lines Makes A More Elegant Flower Garden Design Than A Wavy Pattern Snaking Around The Garden



# Plant In Groups

- Masses Of Blooms In A Well-Planned Garden Comes From Clumps Made Up Of Drifts Of Three, Five, Seven, Or More Of The Same Plant

# A Garden Without Design Looks Jumbled





A photograph of a formal garden with terraced hedges and flower beds. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall grasses, purple flowers, and white flowers. A large house with a red roof is visible in the background. The text "Plant All Except The Largest Stand-Alone Plants In Odd-Numbered Groupings Of Three Or More" is overlaid on the image in yellow.

Plant All Except The Largest Stand-Alone  
Plants In Odd-Numbered Groupings Of  
Three Or More



# Check How Tall Plants Will Get





# Divide Plants Into Edgers For The Front Of The Beds



# Fillers For The Middle Of The Beds





# Backdrop Plants



# Plant Taller Perennials Toward The Back Of Your Beds

Occasionally Break  
The Design Rule By  
Letting Taller Plants  
Drift Into The Middle





Place Some Tall Airy And See-Through Plants Near The Front





# Use Ornamental Grasses Or Ammi





# Give Individual Plants Enough Space



# Place Plants As Far Apart As Each Plant's Ultimate Spread





# Step #5: Select Plants



# When Selecting Plants, Make A List Of Your Favorites





# Are Smaller, Compact Plants Appropriate?





# Should Taller Plants With Spreading Habits Be Included?





# Choosing Plants For Your Planting Beds



# Choose First By Location





# Second By Period Of Bloom



# Third By Height And Width





# Fourth By Color



# Create Unity In Your Flower Garden Design





# Try Limiting Colors To Those That Harmonize Well





# Put Plants Into Groups Of Three





# Repeat Them Among Single Specimens Of Other Plants



# Unify Plantings With A Strong Backdrop Such As An Evergreen Hedge Or Wall





# Use Repetition





# Repeating Plants, Colors And Textures Adds Continuity





If You Have Flower Borders  
That Face Each Other, Repeat  
At Least One Grouping Of  
Plants On Each Side



## Roses

1. 'Rosa 'Graham Thomas' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

2. 'Rosa 'Charles de Gaulle' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

3. 'Rosa 'Felicie Patte d'Oie' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

4. 'Rosa 'Graham Thomas' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

5. 'Rosa 'Charles de Gaulle' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

6. 'Rosa 'Felicie Patte d'Oie' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

7. 'Rosa 'Graham Thomas' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

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9. 'Rosa 'Felicie Patte d'Oie' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.

10. 'Rosa 'Graham Thomas' - A climbing rose with large, double, pink flowers.



Stagger The Groupings So The  
Are Not Right Across From  
Each Other





# Consider Balance





# Symmetry Is A Formal Approach To Garden Layout



For Example, Plant The Same  
Shrub On Each Side





# You Can Do This Asymmetrically



The Crabapple On  
One Side  
Balances The  
Visual Weight Of  
A Tall, Upright  
Evergreen On  
The Other Side





# Don't Forget Your Focal Point

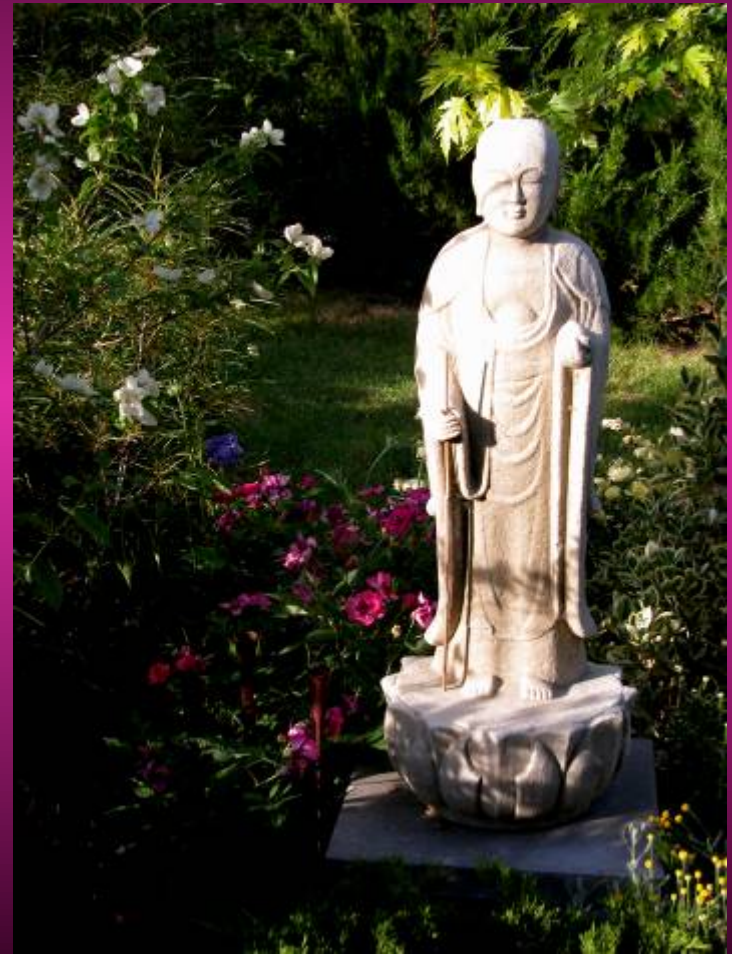


# Appealing Garden Designs Include Eye Catching Accents





# A Bench, Arbor, Gate, Art Or Statuary Are Good Focal Points



# Larger Gardens Have More Than One Focal Point

















# In A Small Garden, Mark The Entrance With Special Accents





# A Gate Through An Arbor Is A Timeless Classic



# Herbaceous Border Excitement Lies In The Design Flexibility





# The Contemporary Border Follows Few Rigid Rules



# It Allows Fullest Expression Of The Gardener's Taste





# It Considers Form, Placement, And Selection Of Plants





# For An All-Season, Mixed Border, Select The Right Plants





# Choose Key Plants For Line, Mass, Color, And Dependability



# Line Is The Silhouette Or Outline Of A Plant





# Mass Is Its Shape Or Denseness





# Dependability Keeps It Attractive Without Problems





Check Handouts, Garden Books  
And Catalogs As References

# Use Borders In Front Of Shrubbery, Fences Or Buildings





# Tall Flowers May Serve A Dual Purpose



# Use Hollyhocks Or Delphiniums In The Border And As Backgrounds





# Medium Height Flowers Are Backgrounds For Short Borders



Generally, Avoid A  
Ruler-Straight Front  
Edge Unless The  
Garden Is Very  
Formal





Gentle Sweeping Curves Laid  
Out With A Garden Hose Work  
Best Even Along A Fence





Taper The Border As  
It Recedes From The  
Main Viewing Point  
To Enhance The  
Illusion Of Distance





# The Deeper The Curve, The Slower The Eye Moves





# This Gives Greater Visual Enjoyment





Borders Outlined With  
Bricks Or Flat Stones  
Set Flush With The  
Soil Are Better Than  
A Steeply Cut Lawn  
Edge That Must Be  
Trimmed After  
Mowing



Organizing Plant Selection Is  
Simplified If Two Main Mass  
Forms Are Considered: Drifts  
And Clumps



# Drifts Are Groupings Of A Plant That Flow Through The Border



Clumps Are Circular  
Groupings Of A  
Variety, Or A Single  
Large Plant Such As  
A Peony





# Vary The Length Of Drifts, The Diameter Of Clumps And Their Heights For Best Effect



- Keep Dimensions In Proportion To The Size Of The Border





# Use Large Enough Groups For Masses Of Color Or Texture



- Random Collections Of Different Small- To Medium-Sized Plants Give A Disorganized, Checkerboard Appearance





# Flower Groups Should Have Irregular Shapes





# Blend Masses Of Color And Texture Into Pleasing Patterns





# Use Dwarf Flowers As Edgings Along The Front Of The Bed



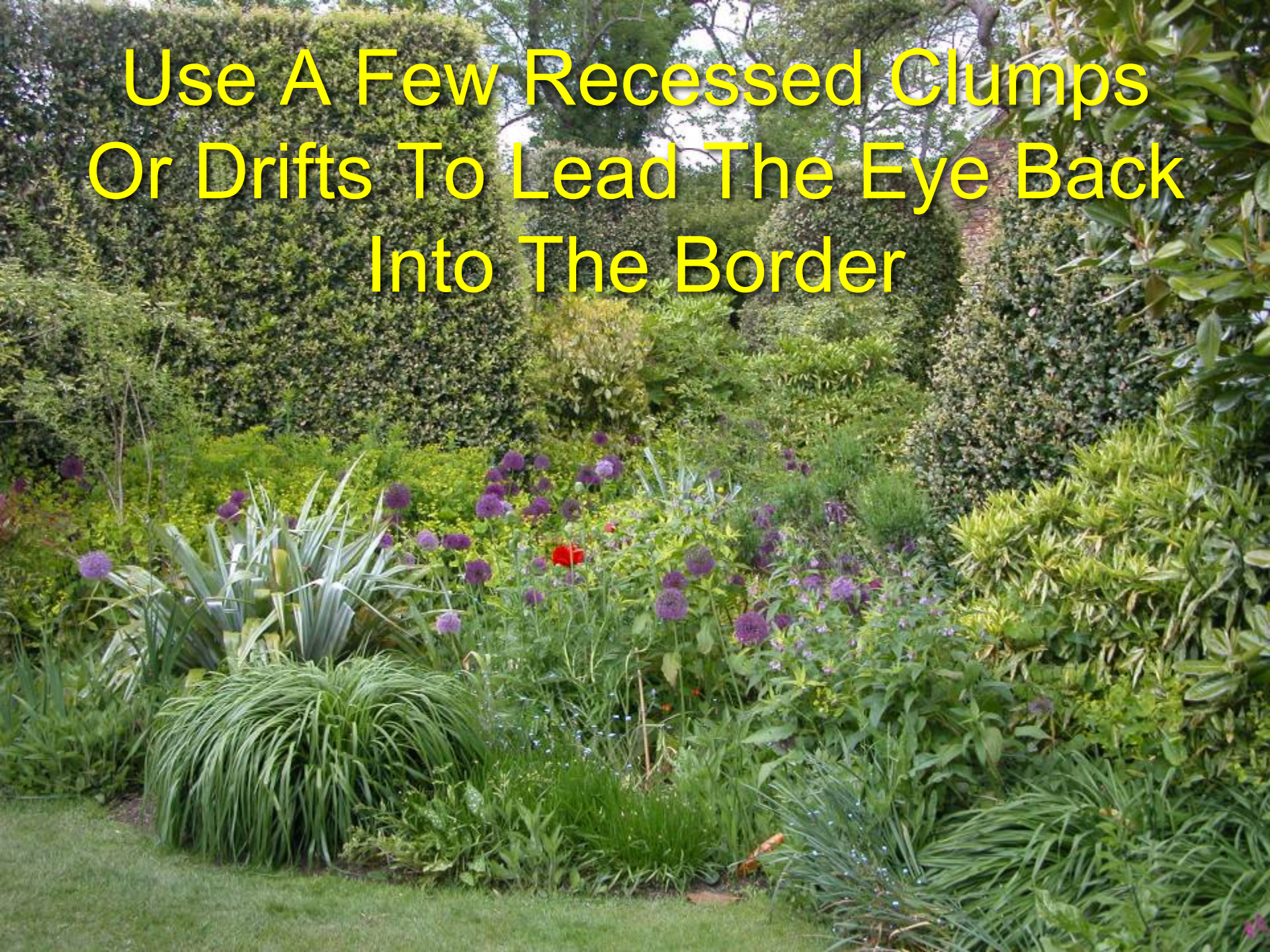


Break Up The Skyline By Letting  
Tall Plants Extend Into The  
Medium Height Groups





Use A Few Recessed Clumps  
Or Drifts To Lead The Eye Back  
Into The Border





This Gives A More Natural Effect Than A Step Profile





# Vary Heights, But Keep Taller Plants Behind Shorter Ones



- The Distance Between Plants In A Flower Border Depends On The Form Of The Individual Plants And The Desired Landscape Effect





# Allow Adequate Space Between Plants



# Many Gardeners Crowd Their Plants Too Much





If That Happens, Dig And Divide  
The Plants To Use Elsewhere







Perennial Design Are Not One Time, Install  
And Forget Plantings- They Are Living  
Works Of Art That Create Changing  
Dynamic Beauty In The World Most  
Important Garden, The One In Your Own  
Backyard