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Arbors, Bowers Gazebos and Trellises

Arbors are lovely addition to many gardens. Arbor, from the Latin word for tree, indicates the structure purpose of supplying the type of shelter a tree would give.

The antiquated term "bower" is sometimes used interchangeably with arbour. The word, strictly speaking, denotes plant growth that forms a natural recess without the support of a structure, such as a weeping tree.

In ancient Egypt, tunnel-like structures supported grape vines. Although decorative pleasure gardens likely had arbors, they were primarily functional rather than decorative features.

The arbor made its way to Greece and Italy, where the architectural influence of the Romans gave arbors new bold designs.

Romans added stone columns and ornamental busts as well as lattice and arched roofs. Although very decorative, they were still important for protection from the hot sun.

In the Iberian Peninsula, the Moors designed many magnificent gardens. Because they came from the desert areas, they built their gardens to give protection from the sun by using vine-covered arbors.

This style of gardens and the arbors and arches went with the early explorers and spread through most of the new world.

By the 16th Century in Europe, arbors made with willow, ash or juniper branches and accented with fragrant flowering vines flourished in many different gardens.

They provided noble ladies with a retreat from the sun throughout England. Arbors in modern gardens add beauty and ambience to any

landscape by providing a leafy, shaded shelter as the name suggests.

Successful arbors, like all landscape structures, need to be used in the right way in the garden. Many arbors are focal points, they need to be designed to fit your garden style and placed so plants and hardscapes emphasize them.

Arbors can be entryways into a garden room or into adjoining landscape areas. They can define the use of areas in the garden, tie together or separate gardens, and direct garden visitors.

One of the most successful uses of arbors is to link together the house and garden by providing an attractive welcome to your home.

Other arbors serve more as diversions. Tuck these away among the plants so they will be the secluded getaways you are hoping for.

Arbors can also double as shelters and privacy screens or hide unsightly features such as tool sheds, composters or woodpiles.

Their uses are almost endless. Use them to arch over pathways, provide a roof over a swing, spa, or hammock or shade a fireplace or a picnic table. Use them as a wonderful place to display your favourite vining plants in the garden.

Arbors provide additional planting areas and create interesting vertical dimension for any garden.

Whether you have an informal English cottage-style garden, a formal European garden or a vegetable garden, you can make it better with vertical growing. Arbors help dress up the garden or solve design problems. Graceful and romantic, practical and useful, arbors add a touch of elegance and relaxing

ambience to any garden setting.

Traditional timbers are giving way to other construction materials. Lumber, wrought iron and other metals, plastic, galvanized pipe, vinyl and other materials are durable. Select strong, durable components that can support the plants growing on them.

After the arbor construction is complete, the real fun of creating an arbor begins with choosing plant materials. Arbors cry out for vining and trailing plants.

To add fragrance to the arbor, choose trumpet vines, wisteria, honeysuckle or fragrant roses. Create a "jam and jelly" arbor by planting grapevines to grow a bountiful harvest of grapes for fresh eating or making preserves.

Vines do not automatically take to arbors. Like new puppies, vines must be trained. Tie the vines as they grow to the arbor structure with green plastic tape or strips of soft natural cloth. Avoid wires or synthetic materials that may girdle the plants because they do not decompose.

Once established, vines are generally disease-resistant, problem-free plants that require little maintenance beyond watering and occasional pruning. Arbors and trellises covered with vining plants offer also very practical advantages of cooling shade

Arbors and slatted wooden overhead structures can be effective either attached or adjacent to the home or farther out in the landscape.

If adjacent to the home, they shade the walls and windows plus reduce heat and glare. They also provide cool, restful sitting and viewing areas.

Trellises are constructed of strips of wood, metal or plastic crisscrossed to form diamond or rectangular latticework. Trellises can be fan shaped or any form that suits the allotted space

and the plants.

Use fences as trellises to form a leafy perimeter around a garden. Freestanding trellises provide privacy screens or separate garden spaces.

Trellis walls can save space in the vegetable garden for edibles plants or bring in the fragrance of sweet peas or honeysuckles.

Archways are abbreviated arbors shaped like an inverted U. These garden entrances are often combined with gates. A series of vine-covered archways spaced at intervals along a sunny pathway creates a pleasant walkway.

Pergolas originated as shaded canopies over terraces or a shaded passageway from buildings to the garden in hot climates. Traditionally they are strong structures of sturdy posts and crossbeams for supporting vigorous plants.

Pergolas in ancient Egypt and in Italian Renaissance gardens were popular but in northern countries, shade was less critical. In modern times, both arbor and pergola structures are called arbors.

Gazebos are small, roofed pavilions designed to provide shade and a view of the garden. They originated as watchtowers in fortress walls. This 18th-century joke word, "gazebo", combines gaze with the Latin suffix ebo meaning "I shall."

Traditionally they are made with a solid roof, floors and seats while the sides are open. Historically, these summer houses have not been used as plant support structures. Modern adaptations with an open-grid roof and trellis walls support vines much like an arbor.