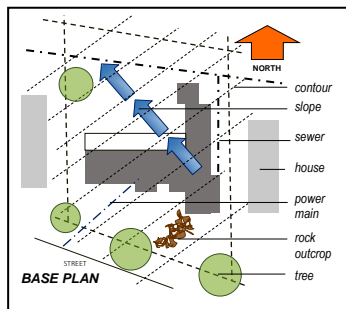




## Garden Design Study Group

### Principal procedures to consider in preparing the landscape planning, design and plant selection for your home garden.

Excerpts from the Garden Design Chat Room at ANPSA Conference 2022 - by Lawrie Smith



#### FIRST . . . Record the physical characteristics of your garden

Whether it be a new project or existing under rehabilitation

- Most important first step – **locate north!**
- Prepare a layout plan showing the size and shape of your property
- Indicate the landform, slopes and levels; consider possible modifications
- Indicate on-site & adjacent structures & trees which influence the garden
- Locate and record location of underground and overhead services; and solar
- Determine existing patterns of soils and rocks – sand, clay, loam
- Identify existing vegetation for preservation, transplant or removal

#### SECOND . . . Analyse - get to know your site and its surrounds, personally

Illustrate on the layout plan the physical and microclimate impacts . . .

- Assess the seasonal patterns of sunshine and shade over the site
- Identify the varied influences of breezes, storms, winds
- Identify the effects of rainfall and water runoff; consider harvesting
- Plan careful earthworks, avoid burying topsoil under excavated subsoil
- Assess soil & sub-soil pH: below 5.5 acid - neutral - above 7.0 alkaline
- Visual aspects positive and negative: long or short views, glimpses, privacy

#### THIRD . . . Planning - identify your principal family needs & functions

Define on plan how YOU want to use the garden . . .

- Plan for interesting arrival & first impressions – focal points
- Don't forget that first impressions are the most lasting!
- Plan functional & interesting access by pathways and lawns
- Identify vehicle circulation requirements – access, parking, construction
- Define suitable areas for outdoor living activities - "Come inside the outside!"
- Identify areas for work activities in the garden – fernery, potting, kitchen garden
- Plan for innovative children's play areas and facilities

Don't forget – a garden is your artistic creation that evolves over time

#### FOURTH . . . Garden Design - choose a style & theme for your garden

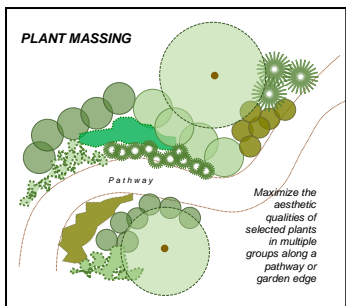
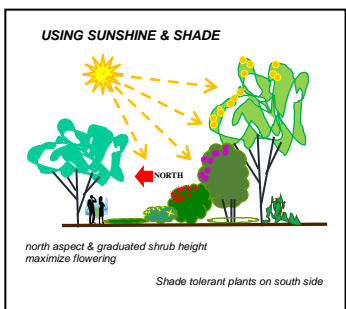
Your design and plant selections will be strongly influenced by your preferred garden style and character . . .

- First assess your budget, personal priorities, available time and health issues
- Should the garden reflect the architectural style of the house?
- Will the garden be an exciting fusion of plants and materials?
- Style - formal, informal, traditional, contemporary, seasonal horticulture display?
- Theme - 'Walkabout' garden, bushland, rainforest, coastal, cottage or?
- Perhaps a garden for plant collectors, scientific trials, experiments?
- Ideally the garden should be new, fresh and uniquely Australian!
- Overall fundamentally simple, livable, affordable and sustainable.

#### FIFTH . . . Plants & Planting - get ready to select plants for your garden

Each plant has differing attributes, consider each of them wisely . . .

- What is it? – tree, shrub, cover, vine, fern, palm or ?
- Where is it from? Local, regional, natural, exotic
- What conditions does it prefer? Microclimate? Soils? Mulch type?
- How big does it grow in natural locations?
- Have you seen it thriving nearby?
- Does it adapt to garden horticulture techniques?
- What is its most prominent feature – form, foliage, flowers, fruits, bark or?
- Where are the most flowers and colourful foliage displayed & when?





## Things to think about when choosing and siting plants in your garden

*These masterly suggestions for plant selection prepared for the Garden Design Chat Room - by Chris Larkin*

- A. If we concentrate on selecting plants, then there is so much to keep in mind all at once when choosing which plant to use in your garden – and it all relies on plant knowledge. You can get that knowledge from visiting gardens in your neck of the woods, joining your local Australian plant group, referring to books and the internet. Things to consider when choosing a plant:**
- **The plant's form** – its mature size and growth habit.
  - **The plant's function**- such as screening, providing cover and colour at ground level, cascading over an embankment, covering/climbing a structure, punctuating the view along a path by being repeated, being repeated on different sides of a path providing a sense of passing through a landscape etc
  - **The plant's foliage**- in relationship to neighbouring plants – similar for calm cohesion, contrasting in form and/or colour for variety and interest.
  - **The plant's flower colour and time of year of flowering** – to complement or contrast with neighbouring flowering plants or even ones further away in the garden but visible.
  - **The plant's health and happiness in the position you are thinking of placing it**– will it cope with the growing conditions of soil, sun/shade, wet/dry, wind etc.
- B. There are then some things to closely consider in deciding on plant placement. If you want certain outcomes then think about the following:**
- Keeping small plants and ground-covering plants at the edge of garden beds and along pathways so a greater feeling of space is preserved, and you can see plants further back in a bed unless your aim is a border hedge or maze.
  - Larger shrubs are generally used at the back of a garden bed or to block through views or to screen/distract attention from e.g. a building
  - A great deal of thought needs to go into the placement of trees. Their height will give scale to your garden, provide dappled shade for heat relief for plants and humans, and wonderful light effects of sun and shadow. Do you need them to provide protection from the western sun?
  - Repeat the same plant or similar plant, spaced from each other, for restfulness and visual rhythm and cohesion. Repetition can be within a bed, either side of a path or as a way of connecting one garden bed with the next so there is a visual flow.
  - Strap-leaf plants are significantly different plants in their form. They can be used singly as a feature plant if large enough. Smaller ones can be repeated down paths if they are set back to avoid them being a tripping hazard or they can be repeated/interspersed within and between garden beds.
  - Mass plant the same plant if space allows for impact.
  - Work with complementary plant foliage using contrasting plant foliage type or colour for interest – and repeat if only one of this type of plant is too attention seeking.
  - Use a range of plants for seasonal, but year-round flower colour.
  - Look for opportunities to create views deeply into a garden bed to increase a sense of space and make your garden feel bigger by layering plants and/or using ground-covering plants to provide visual tunnels.
  - Using plants to frame a view can happen at any height. A path can be framed with small plants either side or a big view can be framed by a gap in the trees – and everything in-between.
  - Look for opportunities to connect and capitalise on a borrowed landscape if you are lucky enough to have one.
  - Step inside and consider the views you want from inside the house and into the garden.
- C. Think not only of what the environment can do for you but what you can do to support the environment. Let's garden for nature and with nature:**
- Incorporate indigenous plants into your garden plant design
  - Avoid weed species by checking with the Local Council or Landcare group
  - Ground covering plants or low growing shrubs are your true friends in so many ways. They can in time take the roll of a living mulch suppressing weeds and protecting the soils from moisture loss and erosion from water run-off. This means they are helping to protect not just the roots of plants but the all-important complex soil microbiome on which everything depends.
  - Trees or large shrubs are the birds' highways in the sky. They chose this root because they can fly but also for safety so you do need these big plants to bring the birds your way.
  - It is just as important to support insect and invertebrate life as that of birds so not all plants should be bird attracting.