

## MIRRORS IN THE GARDEN

Mirror, mirror on the wall...whose garden is the grandest of them all? Mirrors in the landscape are a hidden secret among garden designers past and present. Historically, they have been used in French Renaissance gardens since the seventeenth century. Two examples of French Renaissance gardens include the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles and the Gardens at Chantilly.

Mirrors are an intriguing design element enhancing a garden of any size. Reflections of foliage, sunlight and sky can add dramatic effects to your enchanted outdoor escape.

The placement of a mirror is of critical importance in the garden. A fundamental question to ask yourself is what is my design intent for the mirror? In the urban garden a need to extend one's outdoor space is a common issue that a mirror can solve. Often the reflective qualities of a mirror can create the illusion of scale and depth.

Revealing doubles of a scene is an attractive feature of a mirror. For example, one may use a mirror on a lattice fence to reflect a formal dining area; clematis could frame the mirror and soften the hard vertical lines.

Mirrors situated at the end of a garden path are ideal to serve an endless expanse (instead of a dead end). Ironically there are numerous "mirror-like" elements in nature itself: pools, raindrops or clouds may be captured in your garden without using a mirror at all. A perennial called *Alchemilla mollis* (Lady's mantle) retains water droplets on its foliage which reflect light and look remarkable.

Bird lovers fear not - the mirror can be strategically positioned to avoid potential fatalities. Place the mirror so that it is not in the bird's direct flight path or desire lines. Other options for diversions include planting

a tree or shrub to interfere with the flight path or placing a clear plastic netting a few inches away from the glass to cushion them.

Mirrors in the landscape continue to be primal objects of fascination in the landscape. Their endless possibilities to amaze, deceive and reflect character or movement make them a must have for any garden in the spring, summer or fall season.

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