

THE CUTTING EDGE

Gardens are full of edges. Essentially an edge is a line along which something begins or ends. Defining and designing edges are a crucial way to perfect your garden. As a landscape designer, I frequently observe edges in the garden and in my practice often manipulate them to suit the site.

In essence, edges exist where different materials meet. For example, if you dig a pond, lay a stone patio or build a retaining wall you are creating edges. There are two different types of edges--hard and soft. Both types may be integrated in all kinds of garden styles. A soft edge consists of a subtle transition, perhaps between a ground cover and the more upright perennials in a planting border. An example of a hard edge would be a paved path meeting a lawn in a formal French garden with crisp geometric lines. The type of edging material you choose becomes dependent on the type of garden style, the shape of the beds and lawn areas. Plants are an important edging tool. Low growing perennials or annuals planted in a colourful mass soften hard edges. Some annual favourites include: alyssum, coleus or dianthus; perennial examples include lady's mantle (*alchemilla mollis*), candytuft (*iberis sempervirens*) or creeping baby's breath (*gypsophila repens*). The fragrant creeping baby's breath will draw people in as they walk along the garden path.

Here are some creative edging design tips. If you are designing an English country garden, stack flagstone with irregular shapes and thicknesses along the border edge. This feature will create a miniature retaining wall with a natural look. Rockery looks great around organic shaped beds. Try limestone boulders, river rock or fieldstone; the versatility of size, colour and texture have endless possibilities. Although stone is

costly, it is maintenance free, looking better with age.

Cedar posts cut in varying lengths can add visual interest and texture to your garden border. The repetition of the posts creates a sense of harmony.

Do you have a lot of empty bottles at home collecting dust? Bury the bottles neck down into the soil for a unique and environmentally friendly edging idea. Remember that the bottles do not have to be a uniform shape and colour.

Edges are essential pieces of the garden puzzle. Observe them closely to see where and how they fit into your outdoor space. Enhance your garden this summer using your bordering edge to create character, fragrance and texture.

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