

TIPS FOR THE URBAN GARDENER WITH A SMALL LOT

Size Matters

I have noticed a number of smaller sized gardens that are filled with predominantly small plants. Often a garden filled with only tiny plants makes the space appear smaller than it actually is. Avoid this miniaturized landscape and use a few larger scale plants that give some presence and contrast to your space. Even selecting one small tree or multi-stem shrub as a focal point is worth considering. *Cornus mas* (Cornelian-cherry dogwood) is a wonderful small tree and one of the earliest woody plants to flower. Cheery yellow flowers cover the tree in mid April; a beautiful sign of spring.

A layered look with plants of varying heights is what you are trying to achieve; this will create the illusion of depth in your small garden.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Too many types of plants can make a small garden look chaotic. There is a reason why arboretums have more than five acres of land! Remember that you want to feel relaxed and comfortable in your garden. Your goal is not to display as many plants as possible but a few plants that go well together and thrive in the same growing conditions. Astilbe and hostas are two of my favourite shade tolerant perennials that look terrific together. Repeating the same plant in key locations around your garden will draw your eye around the space. Pots will also extend your planting area so that you can experiment with new and different varieties.

Feeling boxed in?

Planting beds located around the property line of your lot draws attention to the boundaries

and the limits of the small space. Try hiding the boundaries by designing beds on a forty five degree angle away from the fence lines. The diagonal lines hide the squareness of the property by leading your eyes away from the boundaries.

Consider this design tip. By painting or staining your fence a darker colour, it will blend into the background allowing your eyes to focus on the more dominant floral features in the foreground.

Be bold with your garden and dare to be different. The possibilities are infinite and ever changing in your small urban garden.

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