



formality in today's *Gardens*

TIMELESS DESIGN FOR YOUR OWN GARDEN SETTING

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As a designer of small formal European-style gardens, my love of symmetry, balance, dramatic scale, and simplicity is what drives my creations. Some people believe that formal gardens are suited only to sites on a grand scale. But I have found just the opposite. Whether they are intimate and complex or simple and streamlined, small formal gardens have one thing in common: They have a terrific ability to provide year-round interest and are surprisingly easy to maintain. The added bonus: A formal garden transcends the whims of fashion. It never goes out of style.

There are so many options open to those who wish to create a formal garden today. One of the most exciting is the

opportunity to use garden statuary and water features to provide a focal point or framework for the design and add a feeling of vitality to a garden space.

For centuries, statuary and fountains have anchored formal baroque parterres, intricate herb knots, potagers, topiary, and rose gardens throughout Europe, thanks in great part to work done by statuary makers in the London-area factory of Eleanor Coade, which operated from the early 18th century through the middle of the 1800s.

Fortunately, today's landscape architects and designers have myriad choices for garden art that looks aged, although it is new. One of the West Coast's largest suppliers, Lucca Statuary,

in Seattle, Washington, specializes in hand-cast concrete pieces that are custom-finished with muriatic-based penetrating stains originally designed for floors.

But it is not enough to have beautiful product from which to choose. Unless it is carefully and thoughtfully placed, garden statuary and fountains can look sorely out of place—like a bad collection from the movie set of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*—or worse, like they fell from the sky and landed haphazardly in the middle of the front yard. Conversely, gardens designed around beautiful statuary are restful places to be, no matter what the season. Here are few important considerations for using fountains and statuary in your garden:

Building a garden without structure is like writing a sentence without punctuation. If you are starting from scratch, build the bones of your garden before you plant. The hardscape is the most important element—paved areas on which to put furnishings and walls to give your garden structure and privacy. Always pick your fountain and your architectural garden ornament first, and then design your garden around them.

Adopt the European principle of using every inch of space and living in it to the fullest. Look carefully at your yard. Right now, you have untapped space potential waiting to be reclaimed. For example, a narrow side yard can be transformed into a charming classic allée with Italian cypress and roses, with a tiny fountain at the end of a path.

Courtyard gardens emphasize privacy. You may already have natural hedges or fences that define your space. If not, you'll want to add hedge material. A soft green wall is the perfect backdrop for a bubbling fountain or an exquisitely planted urn.

Don't be afraid to place large decorative pieces in a small garden. One magnificent architectural garden ornament used as a focal point is more effective—and more classic—than a collection of small unrelated items that add up to a lot of visual clutter and confusion. Edit your garden décor in the same manner as you would edit an interior room. Think of statuary as a piece of fine jewelry for your garden. Less is more—more elegant, more impact to the eye.

If you have a larger piece of property or an expansive yard, think in terms of unifying your space into a series of garden rooms. Walk your property and determine the places from which you are most likely to observe your garden or a special view—or the place where you would like to entertain guests. Then plan these areas as outdoor rooms, each with its own architectural garden ornament as a focal point. Consider using a pair of urns on pedestals to create an entrance to a space. By connecting the newly defined spaces with a path, you can move from one special venue to another.

Stand in your windows and observe your garden from the inside out. We spend a good deal of time looking at our garden from inside, during months when it is too cold, rainy, or snowy to enjoy it outdoors. So make every window view count by creating small vignettes centered on a piece of statuary. The addition of low-voltage lighting will create a dramatic effect after dark and make your outdoor space seem like an extension of your interior.

Classic garden statuary provides a delightful detail in garden design. It makes a small garden space seem important, and it makes a case for the year-round pleasures of formality, which easily can be adapted to a contemporary lifestyle. With careful selection and placement, and by building your plants around your pieces, your garden can look as though it has been there forever. That should be inspiration indeed. ■

