



The TIME LIFE
Complete  Gardener

Perennials



**VIEWS FROM INSIDE
AND OUTSIDE
THE GARDEN**

A bench set amid colorful spring-blooming tulips, pansies, wild blue phlox, iris, azalea, and delphinium provides a quiet spot from which to enjoy this Atlanta shade garden. Slightly elevated, with its perimeter edged by curving brick steps, the garden can also be enjoyed from a terrace at the back of the house.

offer a picture of the changing seasons: columbine and candytuft in the spring, day-lilies and Russian sage in the summer, Japanese anemone and asters in the fall, ornamental grasses and sedum in the winter.

Creating a Base Plan

Once you've thoroughly analyzed your site, it's time to put your observations on paper and create a base plan—a map of your grounds. The first step is to take a walk around the property and make a rough sketch that includes all structures and features. Then draw a more precise version of the plan to scale (*opposite*). The base plan will let you see both the desirable features of your site and those that need improvement, and will help you create a garden that will play to the strengths of your property and minimize its flaws.

The sample base plan on page 31 shows a home on a site that was once rural but has since been absorbed into suburbia. The L-shaped house consists of an original log cabin with a new clapboard wing on the north side. The log cabin and stone chimneys still convey a rustic feel, as do a few old trees and shrubs. Situated on a quarter acre, the home

is bordered by other similarly sized lots and faces a subdivision street. The house is set back pleasantly within the site, but the presence of neighboring homes is felt.

The fundamental design issue on the sample property is that of coping with a site that wants to look out over farmland but finds a modern subdivision instead. On a more practical level, the site analysis reveals a need to provide privacy for the patio, to enliven views from inside the house, to better anchor the house to its site, to remove an ailing tree, and to fix drainage problems on the southern side of the property.

As you study your own base plan and take stock of existing conditions, you will instinctively begin to think about important fundamental design features and where they can or, more important at this stage, cannot go. By developing a sensitivity to the character of the property, its contours, and its areas of sun and shade, you will produce a plan that works with your site's ecology and is true to the spirit of the place.

Preparing the plan will also put your imagination to work. Old ideas will be either confirmed or discarded, and successful new ones will come to you. Then you will be ready to move to the next step—considering your new garden's style.

PLANNED CHAOS OF COLOR IN THE COTTAGE GARDEN

The daisies, delphiniums, poppies, and snapdragons of this garden are grouped tightly in a color plan of blues, pinks, and whites, with yellow added as an accent—answering to the mandate of the cottage garden for color and lots of it.



THE REFINEMENT OF THE BORDER

The same general color scheme and some of the same plants as in the cottage garden appear in this perennial border in Atlanta, but its neat edging and the layers of plants rising to a vertical element—the clipped hedge—give it a more elegant and formal aspect.



Perennials for a Cutting Garden

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Achillea</i>
(yarrow) | (blanket-flower) |
| <i>Allium</i>
(flowering onion) | <i>Gypsophila</i>
(baby's-breath) |
| <i>Aster</i>
(aster) | <i>Heliopsis</i>
(false sunflower) |
| <i>Campanula</i>
(bellflower) | <i>Iris</i>
(iris) |
| <i>Chrysanthemum</i>
(chrysanthemum) | <i>Lavandula</i>
(lavender) |
| <i>Coreopsis</i>
(tickseed) | <i>Liatris</i>
(gay-feather) |
| <i>Delphinium</i>
(delphinium) | <i>Paeonia</i>
(peony) |
| <i>Digitalis</i>
(foxglove) | <i>Phlox</i>
(phlox) |
| <i>Echinacea</i>
(purple coneflower) | <i>Rudbeckia</i>
(coneflower) |
| <i>Echinops</i>
(globe thistle) | <i>Solidago</i>
(goldenrod) |
| <i>Eryngium</i>
(sea holly) | <i>Thalictrum</i>
(meadow rue) |
| <i>Gaillardia</i> | <i>Veronica</i>
(speedwell) |

models, the power of formal geometry is reinforced through symmetry, with one side of the garden mirroring the other.

Most such elements would overpower the typical domestic garden, of course, but it is possible to have formality on a more intimate scale. You might create a small knot garden—so called for its knotlike shape—where you arrange the beds in a geometrically balanced pattern with, perhaps, brick walks in between. The beds in a knot garden are usually edged in miniature boxwood, but some gardeners in warmer climates do the job with perennials and herbs instead, using lavender, germander, and rosemary.

You might elect an even more subdued level of formality, using a patio's straight edge as the boundary of your garden, for example, or choosing to plant perennials in borders instead of in freer-form beds. A simple curve with a fixed radius can lend a formal air to a border in a way that a winding curve will not.

Without changing the contours of a rectangular garden plot, you can either sharpen or moderate its air of formality by your choice of

plantings. If you prefer the less formal, plant the garden's straight borders with perennials of different colors and relaxed form. On the other hand, if order and regularity are to your liking, you could lay out a neat pathway through the plot with a mass planting on both sides of a graceful perennial like *Nepeta* (catmint) or a showy one like peony.

Informal Gardens

Curving lines and asymmetry are the key characteristics of the informal garden. The landscape is no less crafted than in a formal garden, but the borders, if there are borders, might take a rambling course alongside a lawn. Often, the plantings are in beds rather than borders, the walkways are curved rather than straight, and trees and shrubs are located randomly and pruned only for their health, not for shape.

Choosing a Garden Style

Within both formal and informal design frameworks, you can choose from a series of specific garden styles. Perennials will have a major role regardless of the style you select. They form such a rich and diverse family of plants that they can be molded to fit into virtually any scheme.

Cottage Gardens

One of the most popular styles is the cottage garden, whose air of rustic domesticity may better suit a suburban property than would grand classical allusions. The cottage garden's origins lie in the old-fashioned villages of England, where the occupants of small thatched- or tile-roofed cottages filled their gardens with annuals and perennials. These were species plants—not today's highly developed cultivars and hybrids, which usually cannot reproduce themselves faithfully from seed. The old plants set seed freely and perpetuated themselves, yielding a riot of color amid an undisciplined growth of vegetation requiring little care from the owner.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, leading gardeners in England developed a style based on the cottage garden but refined to a high level of sophistication. They took