

DESIGN & DECORATING

Out to Win

Want to transform a so-so backyard into a triumph? Add a 'room' to it. The biggest trends in garden design have more to do with maximizing living space than tending greenery

By KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

A RECENT SURVEY of the National Association of Landscape Professionals revealed that the zeitgeist of garden design has little to do with botanical cultivation and everything to do with squeezing additional living space out of our yards. When the association asked 1,000 designers and contractors to predict the most influential landscaping trends for 2019, three emerged: pergolas, a framework or archway which delineates if not encloses an area; unpolished metal finishes, which lend an earthy elegance to structures like walls; and multitasking built-ins that make the most of the puny footprint many of us are working with. Design pros who've implemented these trends walk us through the tricked-out landscapes.

Metal Finishes, Hold the Shine ▶

Where their predecessors favored cedar and wrought iron, contemporary landscape architects are employing clean-lined expanses of unpolished metal—frequently opting for corten steel, a generic term for steel that oxidizes (from U.S. Steel's Cor-Ten). For a New York townhouse, whose owners wanted the garden to feel like part of their home, architect Devin O'Neill surrounded the backyard with walls of this weathering steel, then added a black-painted steel trellis that supports a ceiling of exuberant wisteria vines (pictured at right). "The enclosure feels like another room," said Mr. O'Neill, who founded Brooklyn's O'Neill Rose Architects. The metal, the same material American sculptor Richard Serra uses for his monumental works, rusts within weeks, forming what Mr. O'Neill described as a "beautiful brown leatherlike texture." It's also blissfully practical. "There's not a lot you have to do to it over time," he said. No power washing or refinishing. "It's dummy proof." Corten steel's availability in large sheets makes it a good choice for cladding. Landscape architects at Terremoto, in Los Angeles, wrapped a raised pool with corten, creating a brawny backdrop for a rambunctious surround of meadowy grasses. Other dark low-maintenance metals can also deliver toned-down luxury. For the street-facing front yard of Mr. O'Neill's project on Manhattan's Upper West Side, he opted for planters made of zinc, noting of the material, "It's darker, and reflections are more subtle."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MICHAEL MORAVJOTO; MARION BRENNER; GRANT & POWER; LANDSCAPING

Sort-of Shelters ▼

"A pergola helps create the feeling of a partially enclosed room, and guests usually feel most comfortable outdoors with some kind of protection," said Scott Shrader, a Los Angeles exterior designer and author of the new book "The Art of Outdoor Living" (Rizzoli). He installs black-steel trellises with built-in hanging lights partly because metal requires less foundational footing than heavier options. Just be sure the structure echoes the architectural style of your home. A modern steel pergola

will clash with a shingle-style house, noted New York landscape architect Edmund Hollander. "The designs should be in the same language." In a front yard dotted with oak and walnut trees in St. Charles, Ill., landscape firm Grant & Power installed an Asian-inflected traditional example (below) that picked up on the Japanese flavor of the prairie-style house. Its built-in benches set above a flagstone patio make it a pleasant spot from which to greet guests, said the firm's landscape designer Brian O'Malley. "It's a nice place for a glass of wine."



Two-Faced Features ▲

Where space is at a premium, a garden's man-made elements—known as the hardscape—must do double duty. In San Francisco's Twin Peaks neighborhood, landscape architecture and urban design firm Surfacedesign installed a 16-foot retaining wall faced in limestone (above). It not only braces the hillside, it incorporates a blackened steel fireplace and scattered LED-lit notches that double as footholds for climbing. Old-school hardscaping can also have dual functions. Mr. Hollander likes the ancient 2-for-1 of the Belgian fence—trees trained to entwine in a flat diamond-lattice pattern. "You're espaliering fruit trees to create fences, but meanwhile you're picking apples and pears," he said.

FLOWER SCHOOL

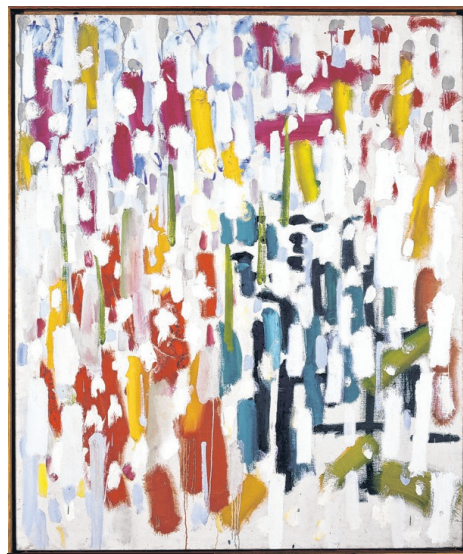
Equitable Arrangement

Inspired by an all-over painting, **Lindsey Taylor** goes for focus-free floral design

CHOOSING A PAINTING of flowering shrubs as my inspiration for this month's arrangement might seem a bit like cheating. But in "Azalea Garden: May 1956," British artist Patrick Heron (1920-1999) so distorts his image of the namesake plants—almost pixelating them with his paintbrush—that I deemed the work fair game.

Heron's composition packs the large-scale canvas (roughly 5 feet by 4 feet) with an explosion of brush strokes in an effervescent palette. Contemplating them, the eye dances back and forth, up and down. Though he started his career as a figurative painter, as well as an author and designer, Heron came to wholly embrace the abstract, as evidenced by this work. Inspired by his Cornish garden, it's now part of a display, "Modern Art and St Ives," at the Tate St Ives, in Cornwall, England.

Much as Heron created an all-over painting with no focus, I set out to give my flowers equal importance. I gathered an all-star lineup: orange and peachy ranunculus, pale pink and deep-purple mottled parrot tulips, deep-yellow single tulips and periwinkle-blue delphinium—not a timid wallflower among them. A collection of matte-white ceramic



THE INSPIRATION

vessels, by New York potter Tracie Hervy, allude to the painting's chalky white vertical gestures. I cut the stems to various lengths, fitting them tightly into the vases to capture the canvas's sense of fullness, yet made sure that some of the flower heads cascade. Never do you want a vessel to look like it's choking your flower stems. Even in a full arrangement like this, they all look happy, if fighting for space a little. I felt this crowding mirrored the effect of Heron's work, conveying pent-up energy bursting into bloom.

Bunched ranunculus, tulips and delphinium channel the exuberance in Patrick Heron's 'Azalea Garden: May 1956.'

Vessels, writer's own



THE ARRANGEMENT

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