KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good At It

“Garden Design to Reduce Stress”

 February 26, 2019

Everyday life can be rather stressful at times so why not create a garden space designed for serenity or to help reduce stress.

Start with colors: Primary colors can be divided into warm (which are red, orange and yellow) and cool (green, blue and violet).  Cool colors are more soothing.  You may use a warm color for accent or focal point, but use only one plant, or less than five percent of the overall design.

Use tints which are lighter or shades which are darker of the primary cool colors, or even pastels which are light combinations of colors.

Try to avoid white, as it is a powerful color attracting your attention. Grays or silvers are more calming and do well in Central Oregon.

Purchase a color wheel to help you when combining colors. Use adjacent ones on the color wheel such as green and blue, or blue and violet.  These create interest, yet are more serene than contrasting opposite colors such as blue and yellow.

Try to avoid large contrasts in other design principles such as heights and textures.  Plants of a more uniform height are more soothing than big ones next to little ones.  Texture is the visual appearance plants create, such as a fine texture from tiny leaves or ferns, or coarse texture from plants with large leaves.

Just as a horizon on the ocean is more soothing than the upright pillars in a cathedral, so are horizontal lines in a design.  These could be from uniform heights of plants, a trimmed hedge, the top of a wall, or even a view of the horizon in the distance.

Curves and rounded lines are more soothing than sharp, straight edges.   Beds that are rounded or versions of ellipses, such as a kidney-shaped island bed for perennials or daffodils, are more soothing than square or rectangular beds such as for roses. Even my pathways are curved to create interest and a desire to meander slowly.

Nature uses large numbers or masses of plants, totally informal or placed at random, in large swaths.  This may seem peaceful to some, but not to others.  To others who like the appearance of a little more control, use select plants with space and mulch between. This may seem more pleasing and calming.  This type of control can be seen in Japanese gardens, with their trees and shrubs clipped into precise shapes.  Whether control or natural abandon is pleasing and calming depends on personal preference.

If you are in a busy or noisy area surround the garden with a hedge of plants, wooden fence, or even an earthen berm if space allows.  These will provide both a visual and sound barrier to the outside world, a principle often found in Japanese gardens.  This means of escape, of shutting out the chaos and distractions, is crucial.

Now ask yourself –
Is the sound of gentle water soothing? If so, incorporate a small stream or bubbling water feature in your garden.  Avoid gushing fountains or waterfalls if you want relaxation. And don’t create a water feature that demands constant attention.

Scent is the most powerful sense, so incorporate pleasing scents in your garden.  Some scents such as lavender seem to make you feel more relaxed. Additional information can be reviewed on our website.

Don't forget the sense of touch.  Use plants with soft, velvety leaves, or at least not ones with thorns!

Using fewer plants also means less maintenance.  Or choose plants that require the least maintenance, such as pruning or staking.  This often means choosing the right plant for the right place.  You want to be able to stroll through and enjoy your garden, not constantly be reminded about what is out of control.  This is not relaxing!

Similarly, only plant what you can maintain.  Too large a space or too many beds that easily get out of control and weedy won’t be relaxing to look at.

To get more ideas, Japanese gardens are great places to visit. If you can't visit such gardens in person, visit them online or through books featuring Japanese gardens.

For answers to all your garden questions and my resource list, visit our website:

[**gocomga.com**](http://www.gocomga.com)and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good At It. Thanks for listening.

Resources:

https://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/stress.html

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/FS299E/FS299E.pdf>

<https://www.ahta.org/horticultural-therapy>

https://japanesegarden.org/