

Shapes and spaces

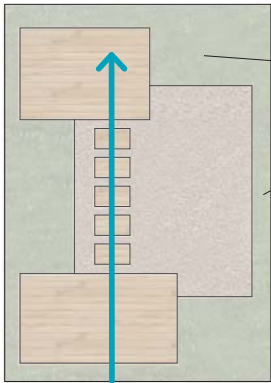
Choosing the basic ground shapes for your plot is a good starting point for a design: one simple shape is best for small gardens, but larger areas can accommodate a variety. How you fill the spaces between the shapes also determines the final look.

HOW TO USE SHAPES

When choosing squares, rectangles or circles for a design, also consider the size, shape and location of the surrounding buildings and boundaries. Experiment with different options: try layouts based on existing features, the structure of the house, and the way the garden will be viewed and used. In general, shapes with straight sides are easier and cheaper to build than circles and ovals.

RIGHT-ANGLED SHAPES

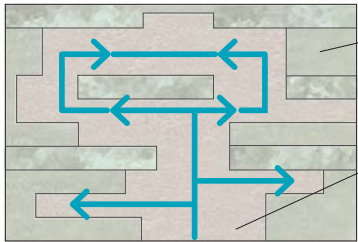
A variety of these straight-sided shapes easily divide the garden into separate areas, provide a strong sense of direction and exploit both long and short views. A long axis running straight down the garden will lengthen it visually; a diagonal layout creates more interest; blocks laid across the plot foreshorten the garden and take the eyes to the sides, making it feel wider.



Large planting spaces for trees or shrubs
Planting may not work in narrow areas
STRAIGHT LINES
This design has a strong linear axis. The shapes and planting spaces are simple and unified.



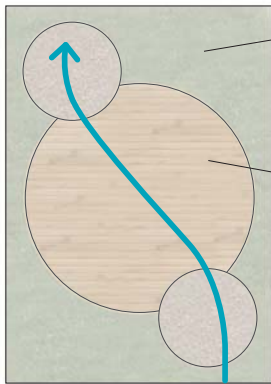
Several large interesting triangular spaces for planting
The full width of the garden is defined by the tilted shapes
THE LONG VIEW
A diagonal layout directs the eye towards the corners. The overall design evokes energy.



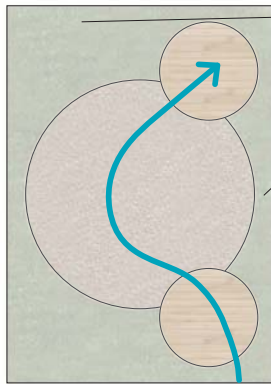
Larger planting areas are limited
A narrow access creates intrigue
FULL WIDTH
A series of parallel divisions, with offset gaps for planting or practical structures, forces movement and views around the garden. The design draws you in.

CIRCULAR SHAPES

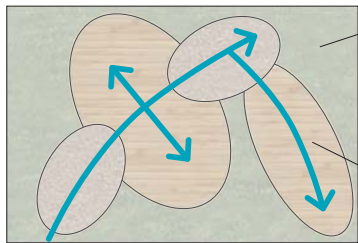
Circles are unifying shapes, and while combinations can create pleasing effects, they do leave awkward pointed junctions that can be difficult to plant or designate. Work with geometric principles: for example, a path should lead you into the centre of the circle; if set to the side, the design will appear unbalanced. Ovals have a long axis, providing direction and orientation.



Large spaces for planting or use as a practical area
Dominant larger circle could be either lawn or hard surface
DIAGONAL LINE
The three overlapping circles are aligned along a diagonal to provide a strong design axis.



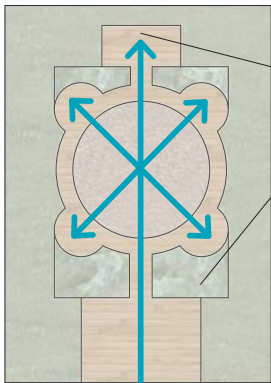
Moving circles to one side allows for a larger planting area
Awkward area needs to be taken into account
C-SHAPED CURVE
The restricted access and pleasing asymmetry of this design create an enticing space to explore.



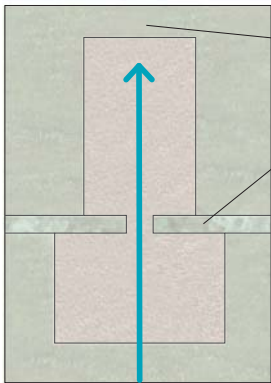
Large planting pockets
Long axis directs the eye
SMOOTH FLOW
Using ovals instead of circles adds a smoother flow to the layout because the eye is taken along their lengths, rather than in all directions as in a circle.

MIXING SHAPES

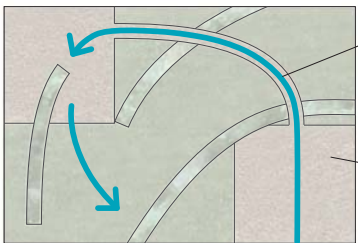
Combining various shapes creates more interest, but throws up problems when a curve and a rectangle meet, or different materials connect. Generally, keep the layout simple, experimenting with scale and proportion to work out how many opposing shapes can be employed. Planting can be used to “glue” the shapes together, and to blur the joins between awkward junctions.



A focal point here will draw the eye down the central axis
Planting separates the different shapes
CLASSIC MATCH
A traditional symmetrical layout, mirrored along a central axis, is the basis for a formal design.



Use planting or a focal point to provide a visual full stop
Planting partly obscures the different areas
SIMPLE APPROACH
Changing the size and orientation of a shape delivers a dramatic and imposing layout.



The path connects and unifies the spaces
Access could be via a patio or terrace
SECRET CORNERS
In this mixture of rectangles and curved hedges, only one part of the garden can be seen at any time. This allows the hidden areas to have different themes.



CLEAN LINES
Interlocking, steel-edged rectangular “trays” are the basis for this simple design. The metal cladding on the building creates a focal point and an effective visual full stop.

USING SPACES

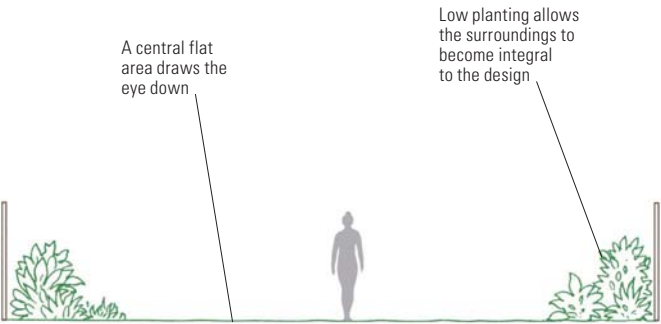
Densely planted spaces, using height and filling the garden’s width, will create a cocoon, while sparse, airy planting hugging the boundaries gives an open, spacious feel. Spaces can also be used to disguise the size and shape of a garden. For instance, a jungle effect in a small garden can imply the existence of more space by blurring the edges, whereas exposed boundaries may make it appear smaller. Conversely, in a large country garden, open spaces can blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, making the plot appear even bigger. Consider, too, existing planting and structures and work with the spaces they create.



MIXED MOODS
This garden is densely planted by the house, allowing close inspection of the flowers and plants, and then opens up on to a spacious lawn, creating two moods.

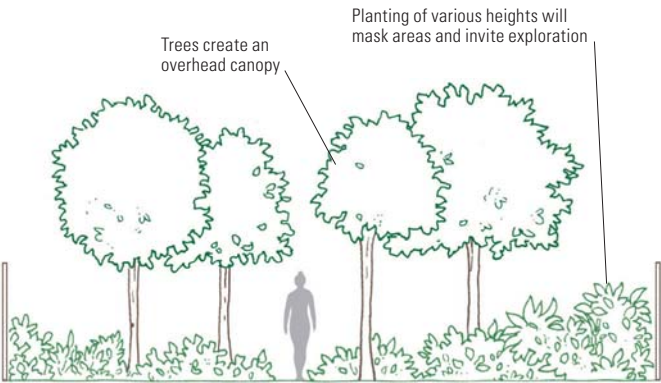
OPEN ASPECT

A narrow space between tall boundaries will be oppressive and claustrophobic. Here, in a design dominated by a lawn or hard landscaping, low vegetation creates an area exposed to more light, longer views and a connection to the sky above. It will feel open, but intimate areas may be lost.



ENCLOSED FEELING

The same space filled with vegetation of different heights will be darker, much more enclosed and with no views to the sides. The path will appear as a corridor through the centre and can lead to different parts of the garden, divided by the planting into separately designated areas.



BALANCED APPROACH

The same path now moved to the side also creates a corridor-like effect, but this time views are allowed under the canopy to the right, across a narrower strip of planting into the brighter space beyond. To the left, secret, intimate places can be created with a pergola or arbour amongst the mixture of high and low planting.

