

Symmetrical layouts

Throughout the world (except in the Far East), from the middle ages to the early 18th century, gardens were not only geometric, but also symmetrical. Inspired by Islamic and classical designs, they transformed the landscape into a controlled work of art. These formal layouts complemented classical architecture and reinforced the belief that beauty derives from order and simplicity.

CONTEMPORARY SYMMETRY

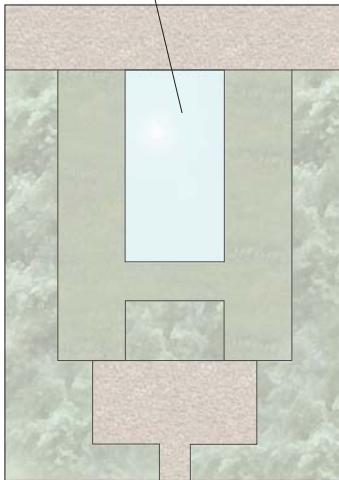
Contemporary layouts can adapt classical symmetry to meet the requirements of modern living, such as creating space for outdoor entertaining or for growing herbs and vegetables. Good design also involves an understanding of a wide range of hard landscape materials and the way in which they can be combined to make a simple and elegant framework for the planting.



COOL CONTROL
A chequerboard of white paving and emerald grass against a dark hedge offers a modern interpretation of a traditional format.

> PERFECT HARMONY
This sophisticated garden illustrates classical symmetry and demonstrates the importance of proportion and scale.

Create a striking central feature to accentuate design symmetry



FORMAL FRAMEWORK
A combination of rectangles with block planting gives a strong structure that works well in a contemporary setting.

INFORMAL PLANTING

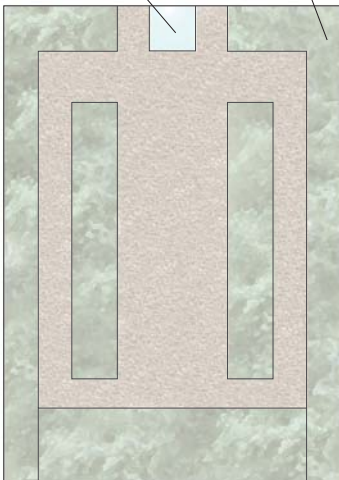
Symmetrical layouts are often less obvious when viewed from eye level, especially when taller plants are used. A variety of forms, textures and colours will also soften hard lines and sharp edges. The combination of formal design and more relaxed, informal planting is a tried-and-tested formula, but requires skill and discipline if it is to work well. The balancing effect of a restricted colour palette and repeated plants, perhaps mirrored along a path, help to develop and reinforce the symmetrical theme.

MIRROR IMAGE

In a symmetrical garden, dominant shapes are repeated and guide you through a sequence of harmonious spaces.

Use a focal point to draw the eye to the end of the path

Lush planting can be used to soften edges



^ SOFTENED LINES
The subtle haze of herbaceous planting spills out onto the path and contrasts with the formal garden layout.

> REPEATED PLANTING
Leading the eye through the garden, this long, airy avenue of grass demonstrates the compositional power of symmetrical planting.



TRADITIONAL AND FORMAL

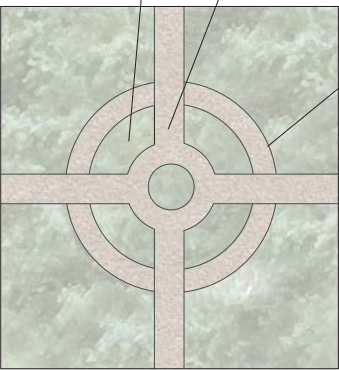
Traditionally, it was the symmetrical pattern on the ground, such as a parterre of low hedging laid out around a central axis, that dominated garden layouts. These geometric designs are still popular in vegetable and herb gardens today, where they allow easy access to tend the beds. In the classical gardens of large estates, a sequence of focal points, such

as ornamental pools and fountains, dramatic sculptures or large urns, were added to enhance key points and to make the pattern more interesting from eye level. Nowadays, when many planting styles are used, the geometric approach works best when the overall design can be viewed from a terrace or house above.



Planting can be changed seasonally for different effects

Crossing paths lend themselves to Islamic-style gardens



Planting edged with dwarf box hedging reinforces the formal pattern

VISUAL JOURNEY

Well-positioned focal points, such as this nautilus sculpture, create a strong sense of direction. The domes of box and clipped yew lining the path accentuate this effect.

CIRCLES AND SQUARES

Reminiscent of a Celtic cross, this layout divides the garden into quadrants with a central focal area, ideal for an ornament.



PERMANENT PATTERNS

This formal layout of box-edged beds is infilled with spring flowers, which will be replaced as summer approaches.