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INSIGHT SYMMETRY

More expert advice on how to create a beautifully balanced garden of your own



WHAT ARE THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SYMMETRICAL GARDEN?

Sue Townsend "First, you need a strong axis, or central line, which can be used to divide the garden into areas that are of an identical shape and size. To provide strong visual impact, position a focal point, such as a sculpture, bench (as in my design, left) or architectural feature, at the end of the axis (or at any intersection) to draw and hold the viewer's gaze. Reinforce the symmetry by repeating strong shapes, colours and textures in the planting and materials, and make sure that the scale and proportion of planted areas in relation to open spaces is well balanced."

"The ingredients depend on the type of symmetry you want – perfection as in Versailles, or a looser Arts and Crafts-inspired garden style such as you find at Hidcote."

JASON LOCK, DEAKINLOCK



HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE SYMMETRY?

Paul Dracott "It's very rare for a garden to be perfectly symmetrical in shape, so I use near-symmetry when I want to achieve this effect. This is where the design seems to be balanced but the proportions are, in reality, slightly different. So, to include a mature tree in a design, I would balance the tree with a flower bed (above) or fountain of similar height. In the same way, I'd place dining furniture on one side of the central axis, with sofas opposite to balance it."



CAN YOU RECOMMEND A SIMPLE DESIGN?

Sue Townsend "For a rectangular garden you could use broad central steps to lead from a paved area by the house to a central lawn with a stone path around it. A stone-edged pool in the centre would act as a focal point and add light, movement and reflections, while a large sculpture on the central axis could draw the eye to the end of the garden. Repeated grasses and perennials in the borders would reinforce the symmetrical design."



HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE SYMMETRY?

Jason Lock "My starting point is often the house. A double-fronted property, for example, lends itself to a symmetrical design, as it has a central axis. If the garden has an irregular shape, I impose order by working in centred pathways, and using hedging, trees and topiary to create focal lines that offset beds and borders on either side. I also like to use looser planting, such as billowing lavender, beneath more structural clipped bay trees to soften the effect."



CAN YOU RECOMMEND A SIMPLE DESIGN?

Paul Dracott "I like classic potager gardens. These have bi-axial symmetry, which means they're symmetrical in two directions, with a central path dissected by another to create a cross and four equal beds between them. Use a large pot or urn as a focal point at the crossing. Calm and formal, this design is very adaptable and the beds can be used for flowers or vegetables, or both. You can also squeeze the shape into the tiniest courtyard or a front garden. ■"

FEATURE ZIA ALLAWAY | PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS/MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES, THE GARDEN COLLECTION, GAP PHOTOS