



ACCESSORIES IN THE GARDEN

FAR MORE THAN JUST AN AFTERTHOUGHT, ACCESSORIES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF GARDEN DESIGN. IN HIS ON-GOING SERIES, CLEVE WEST PROVIDES ADVICE ON CHOOSING FURNITURE, SCULPTURE AND ORNAMENT



Derek St. Roman/Photo: Harri Morgan



You find most people don't think about accessories until the garden is completed, but shopping for furniture, sculpture and ornaments is part of the fun of making a garden and a reward for your hard work. A little thought about the accessories you want at the outset will help set the mood and may even have an influence on your garden's design. At the very least it may affect the construction – for example, built-in seating or a barbecue, footings for a heavy sculpture, or plumbing and electrical work for a fountain.

Knowing the dimensions of a particular table and chairs may even influence the size of the terrace. You can also choose colours, shapes and textures to contrast and complement other elements in the garden.

If you can't, or simply don't, want to be that organised then don't rush out and buy something as soon you plant the last shrub. Browse magazines, shops, flower shows and exhibitions before you make up your mind.

ABOVE: A LUTYENS' STYLE BENCH. LEFT: MODERN SEATING IN DAN PEARSON'S GARDEN.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A CONTEMPORARY BLUE BENCH IS IN KEEPING WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN PLANTING AT THE ABBEY GARDENS ON TRESKO. DURABLE WOODEN FURNITURE ON A PATIO. JOHNNY WOODFORD'S

SEATS COMBINE FORM AND FUNCTION. ANDY STURGEON'S SCULPTURE FOR WESTONBIRT 2003 WAS BORN FROM THE SITE. ANTHONY PAUL'S GENTLY UNDULATING BENCH REFLECTS THE LINES OF PLANTING AT WESTONBIRT 2003.



All: Bill, Derek & Remaine, Cleve Hill



THIS PAGE: AN OAK-WOOD SEAT, PATIO AREA AND RAISED TIMBER BEDS THAT DOUBLE AS SEATING (BELOW) WERE INCORPORATED INTO THE GARDEN'S LAYOUT (LEFT) AT THE DESIGN STAGE.

Furniture

Although it may not be as important as some of the other elements we have covered in earlier issues, furniture plays a vital part in the success of any garden. Sitting, relaxing, reading a book or eating and chatting is the culmination of all your efforts, so don't underestimate the ability of furniture to convey a sense of tranquillity and make it feel welcoming.

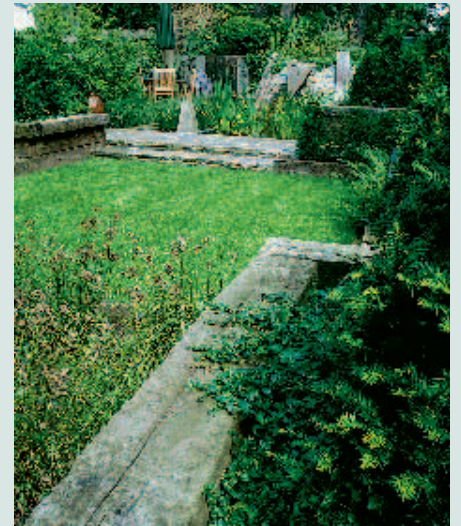
Whatever you choose, it must be durable. Even if you plan to fold everything away under cover when not in use, chances are that you'll forget from time to time. Timber furniture looks good in any setting. Oak and other hardwoods lend a feeling of distinction to a garden, blend in well with plants and hard materials and are soft on the eye – and the great advantage is that they need little or no maintenance. A light sanding and oiling every other year will help maintain their colour. Left untreated, hardwoods will age a beautiful silver. Cheaper, well-designed softwood alternatives are available but need regular maintenance with paint, varnish or timber stain-cum-preserved.

Metal tables vary enormously from heavy Victorian cast iron that might suit a traditional garden to fine mesh with a distinct contemporary feel. Unless they are galvanised, chromed or plastic coated, they too will need painting from time to time.

Plastic conjures up all sorts of connotations, but there are good examples with a more interesting range of colours. White plastic, unless part of a white-themed garden, can draw attention from other more important elements and make your garden look like the backyard of the local café – and it can also be uncomfortably dazzling in bright sunshine. And it's always a good idea to find something that can be folded away or stacked easily.

Occasionally, furniture will be built in as part of the hard landscaping as a permanent fixture, like a cantilevered bench or seating built using stone, brick and even concrete. The permanence of such furniture must be carefully considered, as mistakes can be costly and disheartening. Remember that stone and concrete are cold for much of the year and may need cushions to make them more inviting. When designing the garden it's worth thinking about how retaining walls and raised beds might double as seating for larger gatherings – the optimum dimensions being a height and depth of 450mm.

And with regards to 'living' furniture, while a camomile seat is more a romantic notion than something that would stand up to any regular use, furniture made from willow has certain possibilities if you're looking for rustic novelty.



ELEMENTS OF GARDEN DESIGN



Sculpture and ornament

Whereas furniture has a definite function, sculpture and ornament can be more difficult. Generally, they will be used as focal points and accents. In this sense, ornamentation such as oil jars, statues, sundials and the like are easier to place: they accentuate vistas and axis points while providing a resting place for the eye. Other ornaments may include pots, obelisks, armillary spheres and all the paraphernalia that comes under the broad umbrella of statuary, from antique busts on a plinth to garden gnomes. In essence, we're talking about anything that has the potential to be mass-produced, whereas sculpture is usually an original work of art.

Containers, despite being a potential deathtrap to plants if they are not well tended, are useful for decorating terraces and walls and can even be used to fill gaps in borders with temporary displays of bulbs and tender plants. However, I'm constantly amazed at the relatively few pots I am drawn to, considering the number that are on offer. Many are too ornate with a fussiness of detail that does nothing but distract from the intended plant itself. In general, the plainer the pots the more chance your plants will look good. The repeated use of the same-size pots planted with, say, box balls can look dramatic (especially where minimalism is preferred), but a mixture of sizes is also generally acceptable. Mixing too many styles, however, can make a space feel cluttered, and be careful not to choose an inappropriate style for your theme. A simple, large pot might be impressive enough to work on its own without plants, the for

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: A FUNCTIONAL SUNDIAL ALSO HAS AESTHETIC QUALITIES. DEREK JARMAN'S GARDEN AT DUNGENESS SUCCESSFULLY UTILISES OBJECTS FOUND ALONG THE SEASHORE. BOX BALLS MAKE A DRAMATIC STATEMENT.

being used as juxtaposition with surrounding foliage or terracing. In this sense, the appreciation of form elevates its status to what might be loosely defined as sculpture.

While sculpture and ornament have been used since the earliest gardens, either as trophies from foreign travel or to relay a story, today a piece of sculpture can be much more. Not only will it have form, colour, texture and mass, it may also have meaning and occasionally function (such as furniture or a sundial). Sculpture doesn't always have to be static, formal or as obvious as it once was. Interactive, surprising, fleeting, shocking, it can be used to incite an emotional response and take the experience of a garden to a new level.

Natural materials, such as timber and stone, are generally softer on the eye – especially when they start to age. These are often easier to relate to than the harsh reflective qualities of, say, stainless steel. But much depends on where the sculpture is to be placed and the style of the garden.

Having worked with a sculptor, I have seen how important it is for the artist to get to know the space for which the sculpture is intended. Garden writer Jane Owen sums it up in a nutshell: 'Only when sculpture and garden are totally in harmony can both be expected to achieve their full potential.' For this reason the best work is often site-led and the sculptor is involved at the concept stage in order to see the various possibilities locked within a space. Grizedale Forest Park in the Lake District, where much of the sculpture is site-specific, is a good example. While sculpture in galleries maintains a distance from the onlooker, outdoor sculpture, which bears a relevance to the location, almost commands some sort of contact and interaction. Sculptor Andy Goldsworthy is renowned for working this way and often takes it to the extreme by creating ephemeral work that is born from the site and then eroded

Derek & Romaine, Harold Soley, All Bell

in time by weather and other elements in the immediate vicinity.

Sometimes found objects can be used to decorate and adorn a garden like trinkets. This will usually appeal to the collector and have no place in the minimalist garden. Of course, there's always a danger of overdoing it but, used carefully, found objects can enliven a space. Derek Jarman's garden at Dungeness is a good example: timber, old bits of iron and other paraphernalia found along the seashore and the immediate surroundings resonate with the locality and history of the place.

Finally, it's worth remembering that choosing a sculpture is a personal thing and you may not be able to put into words why you actually like something. A visit to a sculpture garden is a useful way of experiencing works of art in an open space. Even if you don't see anything you like, you might get a feeling for the type of material you'd like to use in your own garden and a clearer understanding of scale and the relationship between sculpture and the landscape. A visit to Barbara Hepworth's garden in St Ives greatly inspired me

some years ago and provided an invaluable lesson in terms of scale. The number of large sculptures located in a relatively small garden is an indication of how timid most of us are when it comes to scale. A confident use of mass can help not only simplify a space, but provide a harmony that is sadly lacking in some gardens. Flower shows are useful – designers showcase ideas that would not always be acceptable in a private garden. Here you might be able to talk to the artist about how a particular sculpture might work in your own garden and, if you decide to buy or commission a piece of work, it's worth inviting the sculptor to help find a specific position for it as this will be every bit as important as the work itself.

For more information, visit www.cleveveest.com



LEFT: BARBARA HEPWORTH'S GARDEN IN ST IVES USES BOLD SCULPTURE IN A RELATIVELY SMALL SPACE. ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALLISON ARMOUR-WILSON'S MIRRORED OBELISK AT CHELSEA 2000. A

CONTAINERS MAKE A STRIKING FOCAL POINT. AT GRIZEDALE FOREST PARK, MOST OF THE SCULPTURE IS SITE SPECIFIC, INCLUDING KERRY MORRISON'S FERN. BELOW: A JOHNNY WOODFORD SCULPTURE AT CHELSEA 2001.



Derek & Romaine, Claire Herz