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people we dig

Looking to create drama and boost curb appeal? We asked those in the know.



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What clients request most: Many request native plantings, which naturally benefit both the environment and our local fauna. With global warming on an upswing, anything we can do to aid our environment is a positive move.

Trend in garden design: We're no longer limited to one or two terraces adjacent to the house. People want a series of outdoor garden rooms or at least different areas developed for use outside.

Boosting curb appeal: Groupings of pots. Scale is really important—I recommend going a little bigger and keeping the pots simple. Most of us don't live in Versailles, so avoid urns and stick with simple forms and different plantings that complement each other. Three pots of varying sizes, each planted with a different plant, in a single color but a variety of leaf textures, always works.

Trend in outdoor living spaces: I think built-in grills are passé. There are some wonderful movable grills and exterior kitchen units that are quite smart.

Adding drama: I love lighting a garden with candles. On my terrace, I have a wrought iron chandelier hanging off my dogwood tree that I fill with candles for evening dinner parties. We often add niches to outdoor fireplaces for candles, groupings of tea candles and hurricane lights scattered through the garden. It's simple and elegant and adds drama without being overwhelming.

Boosting curb appeal: Good professional yard maintenance. Crisp bed edges, fresh mulch, seasonal colorful plantings and trimmed bushes all enhance the appearance of a home.

Adding drama: It would have to be low-voltage landscape lighting. When done well, it can totally transform the landscape. We're often making design decisions based more on how a feature will look at night than how it will look during the day.

Favorite tree: Paperbark maple *Acer griseum*. It's ornamental on a small scale, but bold with a unique branch habit and textured bark. It's a gorgeous tree to up-light after dark.

Trend in outdoor living spaces: Alternate fuel fireplaces or fire pits such as liquid propane and natural gas are most common. They provide the ambience and warmth without as much of a time commitment as a traditional wood fire. With today's busy lifestyle, people like the idea that they can extend their evening outdoors just a little, then turn it off and head inside worry-free.

Trend in garden design: Edible gardens. Edibles are finding their way into perennial beds, foundation plantings, patio pots, window boxes and urban rooftops, just about anywhere you have good sunlight and access to a water source.

Favorite flower: Paeonia 'Festiva Maxima.' Gorgeous white double blooms with an inside surprise of crimson and an intoxicating fragrance make her arrival each year a welcome event.

Boosting curb appeal: Do an honest evaluation and then edit! Add boxwood, hedges or balls to green up your façade. After that, make sure your lawn is lush and weed-free. Finally, for a welcoming touch, flank your front door with two oversized planters filled with some fantastic, fresh flowers.

Trend in garden design: Low-maintenance. The trend at RKGD has been to limit the variety of species and to mass-plant the selected species. We focus on selecting plant material proven to perform well in the particular area with minimal maintenance.

Adding drama: A water feature can add drama visually, especially dark pools of water that reflect the sky. Falling water can add drama as it spills—the sound is calming, and it can also draw out passing traffic. Fish ponds became nature's theater as dragonflies dive across the water's surface. Croaking frogs and chirping birds become nature's orchestra while we all marvel at the magic performance of water lilies in bloom.

Trend in outdoor living spaces: Thoughtfully curating outdoor furniture and fabrics. Custom pieces that reflect preferences and particular lifestyles are also popular.

Adding drama: I like to expose existing rock outcrops and add lighting—this is a dramatic way to take something that people may consider a liability and make it a great asset. I also like to paint an existing white fence blue—it's a quiet eye-catcher, especially with yellow plants planted nearby.

Trend in outdoor living spaces: Multifunctional, usable areas—a fire pit that can be covered with a top to serve as a table surface, a tall wall that doubles as an outdoor screen for movies, a level lawn that is a play area as well as a viewing garden ringed with shrubs, flowers and trees.

Favorite garden feature: Any stone accent. They're durable, waterproof and long-lasting, and they fit our natural environment. I love stone so much that my new book, *The Spirit of Stone*, celebrates it in the garden!

What clients request most: Deer-resistance and low-maintenance. Flowers that fit the bill are Angelonia, Gomphrena and Euphorbia Diamond Frost. Clients also love specimen plants—one outstanding plant can make up for a whole.

Trend in garden design: Sustainable features and native plants. People want to support bees and butterflies—pollinators—who need certain native plants for food. A planting plan that includes native plants is good for the environment as well as beautiful.

Trend in garden design: Vegetable gardens integrated in landscapes both small and large. In landscape design, simplicity and striking a balance between some structure and a relaxed softness are on trend.

Adding drama: This depends on the context. Opening up a view to a distant landscape, creating an overlook, or adding a water feature, creative outdoor lighting, a statement piece of sculpture or creative site grading and sequenced plantings can create drama. It depends on the opportunities that a site offers, and it can be a very personal expression of the owner as well.

Favorite flower: I love hydrangeas. There are so many varieties that provide spectacular blooms throughout the summer months and into the fall. There are new varieties and old standbys that are useful in both traditional and contemporary landscapes.

Boosting curb appeal: Every situation is unique, but I would maintain what you have. Edit out dead or declining shrubs, and give everything a trim so your home doesn't feel like it's being overtaken by the landscape. Top it off with fresh mulch for a well-tended look.

Trend in outdoor living spaces: Our season to enjoy the outdoors never seems long enough. To extend the enjoyment of the summer season, clients are requesting gathering areas that include outdoor fireplaces and fire pit areas, with generous seating for lounging.