

Elements of Design

INTERPLANTATION

As I look out upon my own garden I realize this year has been an easy time for the gardener and garden alike. Plants are flourishing, the past moderate temperatures and generous amounts of precipitation makes the task of gardening rewarding and easy. Bare spots quickly become full of overlapping plants and the garden tapestry melds as if woven on some great loom. I wish I could take full credit for the vision before me but alas the credit belongs to the plants themselves. In 1883, William Robinson, a gardening revolutionary wrote “The various wants of flowers can be best met, and their varied loveliness fully shown, in a variety of positions” In essence, wherever they’ve been placed, the plants beauty would be appreciated for what they are.



A combination of *Euphorbia myrsinites* and *Anemone blanda* work well in this mini tapestry

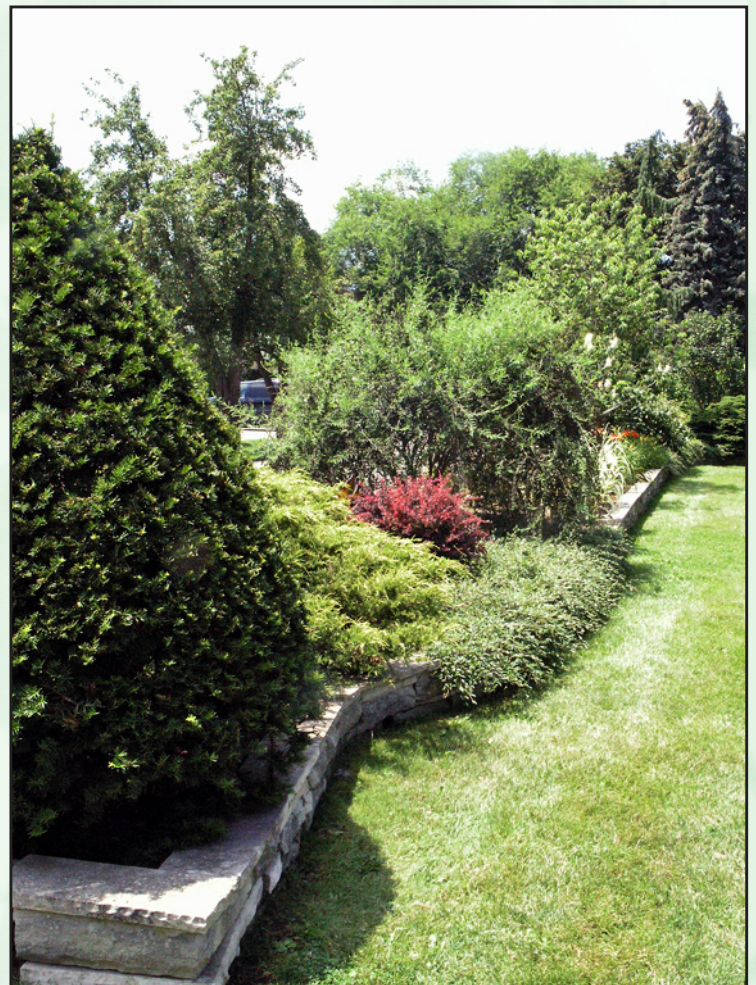
In past columns I discussed individual plants, trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals, those reliable partners in our gardening adventure but what of the combinations of plants; the tapestry which unifies the whole and tells us we have arrived at gardening nirvana? Although an individual plant has beauty the harmony of combinations and the greater effect of the landscape is always sought, even by Robinson himself.

‘Putting plants together’ is one of the greatest challenges facing the gardener. There are so many variables that must be considered, especially if the plant is perennial in nature and its placement will become its permanent stake. We must consider the cultural implications of its placement; once it places its roots down, will it flourish? The cultural concerns overcome the implications of design, plant placement must be considered. These concerns are relevant for there is much to consider in design, such as flower, form, texture, colour and seasonal changes that the

plant experiences. Lastly when composing the entire garden we have to consider the theme and how it relates to its surroundings. It would appear to be a daunting task and we quiver with shovel in hand as we anticipate the great faux pas that lurks.

Robinson, who revolutionized the garden world by writing and enacting his book *The English Flower Garden* in 1883, states that his book was “to destroy the notion that a flower garden is necessarily of set pattern”. This shocked the then-rigid Victorians because in essence threw out the rule book and began to plant for the sake of planting and the beauty of the plant. To paraphrase Mr. Robinson in a late chapter he concludes that most ‘mistakes’ (things that did not please the eye of the individual gardener) could simply be undone with a shovel.

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