

## Application of Plants in Chinese Garden Landscape

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### Abstract

Landscaping with plants as the basic materials creates an art space that is integrated with the surrounding environment through art processing and design techniques, giving full play to the beauty of the plants themselves and the beauty of rocks and water in form and function. Fully understanding the role of plants in creating the garden space landscape is the premise for good landscape designs. Rational use of plants as landscaping materials can bring about great landscaping effects in poetic and cultural prospect.

**Key words:** Plant landscaping; Chinese garden; Plants; Art space

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### INTRODUCTION

Landscaping of garden-plants begins and develops with the overall planning and specific properties of green plants, and should possess fresh ideas and unique characteristics. Garden-plant landscape and other landscape elements ought to form complete and independent views, while coordinating an organic whole with other landscaping scenery. As plants grow and change with the seasons, the garden continues to produce new dynamic landscapes. Plant Landscaping has two artistic expressions: one is to create different dynamic seasonal landscapes by mastering the plant growth

cycles and seasonal changes; and the other is to create an aesthetic space at the same season by utilizing the quality and the original form of plants themselves. In plant landscape design, grasping the different patterns facilitates the control and remold of landscapes.

Plants as the main materials of landscape design have diverse species and different forms. A wide variety of plant growth habits provide landscaping materials and vast imagination in creating a landscape. Trees, shrubs and ground cover plants can create varied planting visual levels. Different tree shapes, colorful flowers and grasses can form three-dimensional rich aesthetic effects. Erect, climbing and procumbent plants, and leaves, flowers, fruits and stems of plants, as well as distinctive seasonal characteristics of garden plants during their growth can be combined into beautifully rich landscapes for people to enjoy. In landscape designs, cognition of landscaping features of all plants and the characteristics of the plant landscape is vital to creating plant landscapes.

In landscape designs, the first thing to do is to understand the growing environment, and growth characteristics of plants, and basic forms and seasonal changes of the plants need to be matched in accordance with certain rules of landscaping architecture, which can demonstrate plant landscapes' layering, colors and seasons. Changes in the environment space of plant landscaping provide people with various points of view as they move each step to achieve mental, emotional pleasures and to present beautiful and rich visual effects.

Landscaping of garden plants is to use different plants as the basic materials, designs in combination with the natural elements and cultural landscapes, fully embodies the beauty of stems, branches and leaves, shapes and color, and creates a functional landscape art space in harmony with the surrounding environment. To create the perfect landscape with plants requires to meet both the plants' adaptability to the environment and ecology and to reflect the beauty of plants in the form of individual and

groups by applying landscape design principles to achieve a high degree of unity of science and art, so that people can feel the ecological and artistic beauty of garden plants.

## 1. LANDSCAPING FEATURES OF GARDEN PLANTS

Respective characteristics of garden plants determine their different forms of artistic beauty and are able to demonstrate the landscape effects, allowing the viewers aesthetic pleasure. Different garden plants can both show the beauty of an individual plant and reflect population beauty of the combined plants according to different design requirements; and plants may also be craftily combined and reasonably arranged on the basis of their different ecological habits to create a landscape effect of plant communities composed of trees, shrubs, flowers, vines and ground cover plants.

Flowers and plants as shrubs, whose role is mostly to dot or increase the richness of color in the garden, feature in their colors and gorgeousness. Due to the wide variety, rich colors and small size of flowers, they are commonly used in garden landscaping. Flowers and plants, abundant in forms and undemanding in cultivation, can be planted outdoors, be as potted plants and can also be combined into different shapes with flower beds and flower belts to beautify the environment, reduce pollution and create a landscape feast for the eyes.

## 2. SPATIAL VARIATIONS OF GARDEN PLANTS

The plants themselves form a three-dimensional landscape, are an important part of the landscape landscaping and are indispensable to landscaping. Tall leafy trees can substitute the wall partition; various vines with climbing habits can use their climbing frames, roof and walls can be trimmed to form a natural barrier; and low lawn plants, because of their orderliness, can be spread on a level ground and bring out a graceful landscape in combination with trees and shrubs. Thus, plants can function the same as buildings or landscapes in the constitution, separation of space and causing changes of space.

Separation of landscape space by plants can form various landscaping attractions according to different requirements. Landscaping should be based on the type, shape, habits, number and design method required of the plants and should be combined with environmental features to form the landscape space. In general, plant layout should be well-proportioned to give different space perceptions. Where scenery is to be appreciated, planting should be sparse, with tree crowns above or below the line of sight in order to keep the perspective unblocked. Plant layout should not block existing views but be integrated with the scenery.

Use of plants can reflect the better state of different landform and topography in gardens, and exaggerate or mitigate the characteristics of the landform and topography. For example the use of tall trees, trees planted in a high altitude can make the terrain look more towering; and trees planted in recessed terrain can make the terrain seem to flatten. The North Hill of Summer Palace in Beijing is not very high, but coupled with arbor species such as purpleblow maple and Chinese pine, the hill makes the mountain look towering over the original, which not only blocks unsightly walls in the north, but also insulates the uproar of vehicles and pedestrians outside the park. And the effect is very significant.

## 3. THE TIMING EFFECT OF LANDSCAPE PLANTS

Plants in different seasons have different shapes and thus form different ornamental landscapes. We can use this feature of plants to constitute a timing landscape to improve the aesthetic appreciation. Plant growth patterns with the seasons provide sufficient conditions for creating and designing the four-season landscape evolution of landscape architecture. Plants arranged according to seasonal changes of plants can create distinctive landscapes in different seasons and different periods of time.

The use of plants to demonstrate landscapes in different times need to consider the growth habit of plants and environmental factors. According to the landscape effects of plants with changing seasons, the gardening landscape reflects different features that can give people rich aesthetic experiences. In nature, plants has rich and varied color changes: in spring life begins, and varied flowering plants give the gorgeous landscape effects brimming over with vigor and vitality; in summer exuberant plants and flowers burst into full bloom, which forms unique seasonal characteristics of summer; in autumn most flowering plants faded, but the heavy fragrance of laurel blossoms was wafted through the fresh air, the autumn Chrysanthemum braves the frost, and autumn leaves and fruits are colorful throughout the autumn, making the beautiful autumn; in winter though flower leaves withered, the pine and cypress show a landscape of vicissitudes. Plants can present seasonal changes, application of which into the garden art can constitute timing landscapes in all four seasons.

## 4. GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GARDEN PLANTS

Most plants have unique requirements for natural climate and its regionalism is reflected strongly, so if garden plants are mixed together regardless of climatic characteristics, counterproductive effect may appear. In different geographical and climatic conditions, only plant

species adapted to local growing conditions can create a plant landscape with regional characteristics. In the long-term cultivation and construction of plants, each region has gradually formed a unique plant landscape in harmony with local regional culture, and some plants have characterized a region or country.

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## 5. CULTURAL PROSPECT OF GARDEN PLANTS

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Use of garden plants to create a cultural prospect is a traditional technique in the Chinese Classical Garden Art practices and is a valuable experience obtained through hundreds of years of development. China has long history in cultivating ornamental garden plants, and many poems, words and songs endowed by garden plants and landscape imply matters in human society, give plants personified connotation, and allows people to admire the natural and poetic beauty of plants with a combination of plant landscape.

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## 6. RICH ARCHITECTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF GARDEN PLANTS

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Plants, as a soft material and vital signs of life, play an irreplaceable role in the landscape and architecture portfolio. Different colors and types of plants, when combined with architecture, can allow the viewers to

experience the richness of the landscape levels. Soft plant leaves can gentle the rigid architectural design by means of planting ground-covering plants, plantings at corners of walls and green walls, and as in the open near a stately building, trees with tall stems, thick branches and stretching tree canopy can be used; and near and around exquisite buildings, trees with small leaves and dense branches can be planted. Ornamental values of architectural landscape can be increased through color contrasts and the space enclosure between the building and a variety of plants.

Knowledge of the role these plants played in the garden landscape construction and of how to use various gardening elements to beautify the environment are prerequisites for the smooth development of plant landscaping. Rational use of gardening elements of plants in landscaping can create a beautiful living and poetic cultural environment for us.

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