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*You can decide to create a cozy corner in your yard like this one in the Author's garden*

## **Designing Your Yard - Part 1: Finding Inspiration**

By Cathy Slavin

Gardens, like homes, have design styles. They can be traditional or contemporary; formal or informal. They can attract a wealth of pollinators or incorporate edibles in combination with ornamentals. If you're unsure how to begin, here are some sources of inspiration.

### **Observation**

You can learn a lot about what you like and don't like by driving around your neighborhood or town. Do you like tightly pruned evergreens or the looser shrubs that are allowed to take a more natural shape? Do you like flowering shrubs or those that provide color with foliage alone such as blue junipers or gold cypress? Do you love a nice neat row of ornamental grasses or hydrangeas or a mixed border of shrubs, perennials and ground covers? Are you drawn to the well defined structure provided by hedges, walkways and walls? Take photos of the landscapes you prefer when it's possible (and polite) to do so.

### **Books and Magazines**

There are some great books out there on garden and landscape design that could help point you toward a design that works for you. Perhaps spend some time at the library leafing through books on landscape and garden design. [Planting, A New Perspective](#) by Piet Oudolf (designer

of New York's Highline gardens) and Noel Kingsbury is a blueprint for creating an amazing naturalistic garden. There are many books on the great classic gardens of England and Europe. Claus Dalby's The Cottage Garden contains a wealth of inspiration and his Containers in the Garden reveals how to create a beautiful display without even putting shovel to ground.

### **Explore Online**

Pinterest, Google Images, YouTube and Instagram all have great gardening resources filled with inspiration. Try searches like "foundation planting designs," "property border ideas," "shade gardens," or "low maintenance gardens." YouTube has some inspirational channels where you can not only get great ideas, but also learn about design and horticulture. Try "Garden Answer" or "Northlawn Flower Farm." I love watching "The Impatient Gardener" because the host is not only extremely well-versed in many gardening topics, but also is witty and earthy.

### **Garden Tours**

Don't miss the opportunity to see what others have done with their yards by attending garden tours. Heritage Gardens in Sandwich is always inspiring, especially during Rhododendron and Hydrangea seasons. Don't forget Falmouth's Spohr Gardens and those at the Museums on the Green. The Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival (coming up in July) provides the opportunity to tour gardens all over the Cape where you can discover plants and plant combinations that work in our area. The Garden Conservancy has Open Days all over the country and many that would be a day trip from Falmouth; you can check out the options at [gardenconservancy.org](http://gardenconservancy.org).

As you look for inspiration, try to notice the details such as infrastructure elements (walks, walls, fences, patios, decking, etc.) If you find a photograph pleasing, what is it about it that you like? Has the gardener provided a grand vista or created a cozy retreat? Have they framed a view in an interesting way or created mystery by hiding what comes next? How have they handled a narrow side yard or dealt with extremes of full sun or full shade? How have they provided interest that will span the entire year, including spring and summer flowers, fall color and interesting evergreens and tree bark for winter? How have they made the garden unique and uniquely theirs?

Whatever direction you decide to take, enjoy the journey because building a garden truly is a journey. I can't imagine ever deciding that my yard is "finished," but rather hope it evolves as my knowledge grows and I improve as a gardener.