

The Spirit of a Cottage Garden

The cottage garden was believed to have originated in England during the Tudor period (circa: late 1400's) when the country enjoyed an extended period of peace, leading to a renaissance. With new exotic plants brought from the East and the New World, there was an intense interest in gardening across the land. The poorer people who dwelt in their small, humble cottages had to plant hardy plants such as vegetables, annuals, berries, vines, perennials, small trees, irises, daisies, day lilies, foxgloves, and flowers to attract bees and other insects for pollination. Today we call these "cottage garden plants" or "passalong plants" or seeds that are shared between gardeners. Generally, the gardens had enough land for the cultivation of food, as well as the rearing of chickens and pigs.

What sets Cottage Gardens Apart

Cottage gardens are described as warm, personable gardens. Let's look at some of the characteristics which set them apart from other gardens.

- **Informal Design:** Instead of orderly rows of plants, the cottage garden has thick borders, masses of plants, and various plant groupings.
- **Closely Grown Plants:** There are not many open spaces in cottage gardens. All the plants are packed together to fully utilize available space.
- **Various Plant Groupings:** A cottage garden has a great variety of plants like bulbs, perennials, herbs, trees, shrubs, vegetables, berries, vines, and annuals.
- **Filled with Life:** The various plants attract many types of wildlife like frogs, birds, bees, bees and butterflies.

Starting Your Own Cottage Garden

Here are some tips to help you start your own cottage garden.

- **Structures:** Structures within the garden should accentuate the garden format. Wooden fences and gates are always recommended, but they should be proportionate to the garden. Try to add arbors, trellises, seating areas, and arches for finer detail. Cottage gardens were typically small and space was maximized by going vertical (arches, walls) and espalier (on Wall) and step-over (by pathways, divider to beds)
- **Walkways:** Walkways should be created to meet your requirements, but it is important to make sure that they are proportionate to the size of the cottage garden. Think about the size and the materials of the walkways.
- **Beds:** Build your planting beds according to the size of the garden and the cottage. It is also essential to consider the depth of the beds. Generally, it is harder to maintain beds which are more than 8 feet in depth. Since you will be planting a large variety of plants, you should pack the beds with organic material beforehand.
- **Planting:** By grouping similar plant materials, you can achieve a greater visual impact in the garden. Color is used to accentuate other principles of design. Always try to create balance, harmony, and rhythm with colors. You can also create some harmony and depth by mixing plants of different texture in the garden.
- **Popular Flowers & Fauna:** Some of the popular plants used in cottage gardens are annuals, bulbs, perennials, shrubs, vines, and small trees like typically small fruit trees including smaller varieties of apple, plum, pear, cherry. The issue here are # of chill hours. Popular flowers include daisies, hibiscus, crocosmia, coneflower, day lilies, and roses.

References

www.gardenforever.com/pages/the-cottage-garden.htm

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/Cottagedesign.html>