



# Trowel Talk!

February, 2011

## Design: It's elementary

You want flowering plants, trees, a patio, a pond, a gazebo, a shed and some "art" in your backyard. Landscape design articles tell you that every object has certain features or "elements" that have an impact on the look and feel of the garden. They say you must be aware of line, mass and space, of form and shape, colour, texture and movement.

What does all this mean? Let's start with the easy terms.

Colour is the element which has the most immediate visual impact. The colours of fire and the sun, reds through yellows, are hot colours - they create a feeling of energy. Opposite them on the colour wheel are blues and greens, the cool colours of the sky and sea, which have a more relaxing, soothing effect. The choices you make depend on personal preference but should be guided by the principles of effective colour combinations for harmony (adjacent colours) and contrast (opposite colours). Bright, vibrant colours draw the eye and therefore are a good choice for featured objects while neutral colours are best used for background structures.

The texture of a surface is how smooth or coarse it is. Metal, wood and stone surfaces range from slick and reflective to grainy and rough. Foliage may be glossy or

fuzzy. The play of light and shadow on these different surfaces is what gives atmosphere to the area. Small and narrow leaves are feathery and catch every breeze, while large leaves have a more solid quality. A fine-textured lawn has a lighter feel than a brick patio. Moving water sets a different mood than still water. Smooth surfaces look formal and make an area appear larger while rougher surfaces seem more casual and make the area more intimate. A variety of textures creates needed contrast.



**Steps – informal and natural, with minimal ornamentation, most accents are greenery, apparently randomly placed. The only obviously man-made and matching elements are the pillars and urns at the ends of the stone wall.**

*Photo: Kelly Noel*

An object with three dimensions has mass - how much depends on its size and texture. The mass of a statue or gazebo is static but the mass of a tree increases as it matures. The designer must be aware of the expected changes in trees and shrubs across the seasons and over the years as this is what creates movement in the landscape.

The form used for an architectural feature, especially one with three dimensions, often reflects one of the great varieties of natural tree forms: upright and columnar, pyramidal or vase-shaped, spreading, rounded or weeping.

The spaces in a garden are the open areas between and surrounding vertical features. They may be background areas like a lawn or patio, or focal points like a pond or flower bed. These spaces are often made rectangular, circular or triangular, shapes which mimic and therefore emphasize the natural outline of many trees.

All the spaces, shapes and forms in the landscape are defined by lines. These may be fixed and physical such as fences, an edge where lawn meets patio, or the perimeter of a garden bed. Other lines are implied or imaginary, such as a change of slope or where shadows are cast. The overall style of the garden is set by the dominant line used: straight lines give a formal and structured look; curved lines are less formal but still organized and dramatic; free-form and meandering lines look rustic and natural.



**More steps, but this set has a formal style with hard surfaces, straight lines and geometric curves, and several symmetrically placed decorative elements.**

*Photo: Kelly Noel*

Now when you see a garden that pleases your eye, look for the way these elements are used to set the style. Notice how they create the mood and atmosphere.

*Kelly Noel  
Master Gardener*

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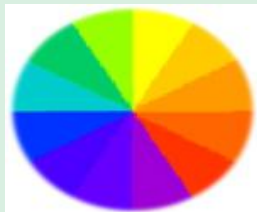
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## February TO DO List

- Prune grape vines – trim the oldest wood and leave only primary stems. Each stem should have four to six canes from last year's growth.
- Prune shrubs and trees – especially fruit trees – this month if they don't bleed (like elm and maple) or don't bloom early (like lilac, rhododendron, and azalea).
- Set up flats for starting seeds. Full spectrum lighting and a heat mat can help you grow a variety of annuals, perennials, and vegetables for this year's garden.
- Have a gardening question or need to identify a plant or pest, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

## Tip of the Month:

A few photos on colour to accompany the feature article:



Adjacent colours – harmony



Complementary colours – contrast

## Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton



### Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

#### ONGOING:

**Telephone Help Line:** 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1-3 pm

**E-mail Help Line:** mgoc\_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

#### CLINICS:

**March 24-27, 2011 – Ottawa Home & Garden Show** – Visit us at our booth, all weekend at this annual Spring show, to have your gardening questions answered.

#### SPEAKING EVENTS:

**Aggressive Plants** – February 17, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Library, 377 Rideau Street, Ottawa  
Hosted by the Library (guests welcome – register at 613-241-6954)

**Various topics – Ottawa Home & Garden Show** – March 24-27, 2011

Master Gardeners will speak throughout the show on garden related topics  
Lansdowne Park, 1015 Bank Street, Ottawa

**Four Season Container Gardening** – March 31, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Catherine Disley-Engler, Master Gardener

Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Library, 377 Rideau Street, Ottawa  
Hosted by the Library (guests welcome – register at 613-241-6954)

**Solutions to Some Common Garden Problems** – April 4, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Community Centre, 220 Old Chelsea Road, Chelsea, Quebec  
Hosted by the Chelsea Garden Club (guests welcome)

**Shade Gardening** – April 6, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Royal Canadian Legion, 177 George Street, Carleton Place, Ontario  
Hosted by the Carleton Place Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

**LECTURE SERIES:** Presented jointly by Friends of the Farm & Master Gardeners

Tuesdays in April Non FoF Members – \$15 for one talk, \$50 for four talks

FoF Members – \$12 for one talk, \$40 for four talks

7:00 p.m. – Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Reservations: [www.friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm#lectures](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm#lectures) (613-230-3276)

**Designing a Garden** – April 5, 2011 – Gaston Tessier

**Sustainable Gardening** – April 12, 2011 – Gillian Boyd

**Organic Gardening** – April 19, 2011 – Rebecca Last

**Roses** – April 26, 2011 – Edythe Falconer



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: 613-836-1491

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website:

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>



Mass planting in hot colours could be used to draw the eye to a focal point.



Monochromatic – White garden Sissinghurst



## Rain Barrel Truckload Sale

sponsored by  
**Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton**  
April 17, 2011  
10:00am – 2:00pm  
parking lot at Building 72  
Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm  
(east off the roundabout on Prince of Wales Dr)



**Over 90% Sold out**

These rain barrels hold approximately 220 litres and come fully equipped with a leaf and mosquito filter basket, an overflow adaptor to connect barrels in series, 1.2m of overflow hose and a spigot.

**\$55.00 each, taxes included**

**Reserve a barrel now:** [www.rainbarrel.ca/ottawacarleton](http://www.rainbarrel.ca/ottawacarleton)

You can pay online by credit card or debit card.

Or you can order online and pay in CASH on pickup day.

Or call 613-236-0034 if you wish to prepay by cheque or have a volunteer assist you with making an online purchase.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of barrels: \_\_\_\_\_ Colours: \_\_\_\_\_

Paid by: cash or cheque Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Give this order form and your cheque (payable to MGOC - NOT post-dated) to any Ottawa-Carleton Master Gardener or call 613-236-0034 for mailing instructions.