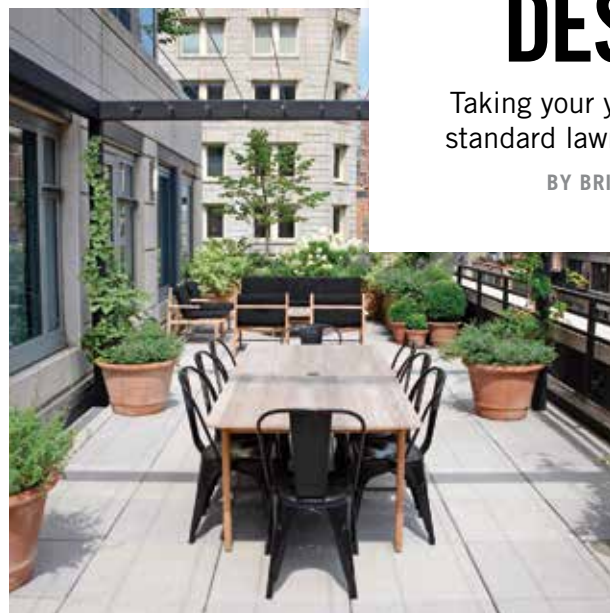




THE ART OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Taking your yard beyond the standard lawn and flowerbed

BY BRIAN BARTH



Incorporating greenery into the landscaping for outdoor spaces adds color and layers to the aesthetic. These patio spaces in various areas of New York City, designed by the Harrison Green firm, reflect ways to make plants, shrubs and trees part of the overall feel and ambience.

When it comes to landscape design, sometimes it seems as though maintaining a simple lawn and replanting the pansies and petunias are all you can manage. But what if someone told you that the best thing you can do for inspiration is to put down your spade and take a hike? Expert garden designers urge their clients to step back and reassess

what they truly want and need in a landscape — and then look to nature, and other people's gardens, for ideas.

Consider: Do you really need that huge lawn, or would a smaller patch of turf surrounded by soft tufts of buff-colored meadow grasses suffice? Flower beds are high-maintenance and require constant primping and pruning. Perhaps a few artfully placed boulders with succulent groundcovers cascading around them would be more rewarding. (It would certainly require less upkeep.)

2019 is the year of yardscape minimalism, says Joseph Huettl, founder of Huettl Landscape Architecture in Walnut Creek, Calif. Not in the sense of austerity, but in clean lines, zero clutter and contemporary vibes.

Huettl's designs start with a "simple, open architectural layout" of pathways, planting areas and hardscape, such as patios and walls. Experiment with the design using a paper outline of your garden by trying out different configurations of intersecting rectangles and ovals. Then add the plant layer — with restraint. Huettl recommends

fewer species massed over larger areas to create washes of color and texture that provide a counterpoint to the strong lines of the layout.

"We're always trying to edit down the plant palette to the most simple, graceful design possible." Flowering plants are used sparingly in Huettl's designs, like a seasonal exclamation point. "Flowers are ephemeral. We focus on texture because it's year-round."

RANDOM, BUT RHYTHMIC

The landscape that Huettl designed for a Napa Valley home, which won an award from the Northern California Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, contains a modest lawn and a courtyard of oversize white pavers arranged in a bed of small, dark pebbles. It's a slightly random, yet organized layout reminiscent of the black-and-white keys of a piano. A white triptych wall forms a focal point at one end of the landscape, echoing the shape of the pavers. A lone pair of papyrus plants — tall, thin stalks topped with soft, grassy tufts — are framed by the wall. A few other papyrus >



The use of varying sizes of pavers and minimal flowering plants are trademarks of Huettl Landscape Architecture in Walnut Creek, Calif. The landscaping design company recommends starting with a layout of your outdoor space using a series of intersecting shapes, then utilizing plants sparingly to fill out the design.

TROON PACIFIC; NICHOLAS CALCOTT (2); NICHOLAS TOGNER; HUETTL DESIGN (3)

“2019 is the year of yardcape minimalism.”

— JOSEPH HUETTL, founder of Huettl Landscape Architecture

plants create accents here and there, but the plants consist mostly of low, clumping grasses — soothing to the eyes, easy on the budget and requiring little in the way of water, fertilizer or maintenance.

There’s an abundance of empty space occupied by little more than a groundcover of smooth gray pebbles. Pavers and custom deck work is expensive, notes Huettl. But you can minimize the square footage of those big-ticket items with the thoughtful use of stones, fine gravel and crushed rock, also known as decomposed granite. He calls the look “warm contemporary” or “minimalism mixed with regionalism,” a nod to the sparsely vegetated hills common to that area of California.

In New York, landscape designer Jacqueline Harrison, a partner in the husband-wife firm Harrison Green, employs similar

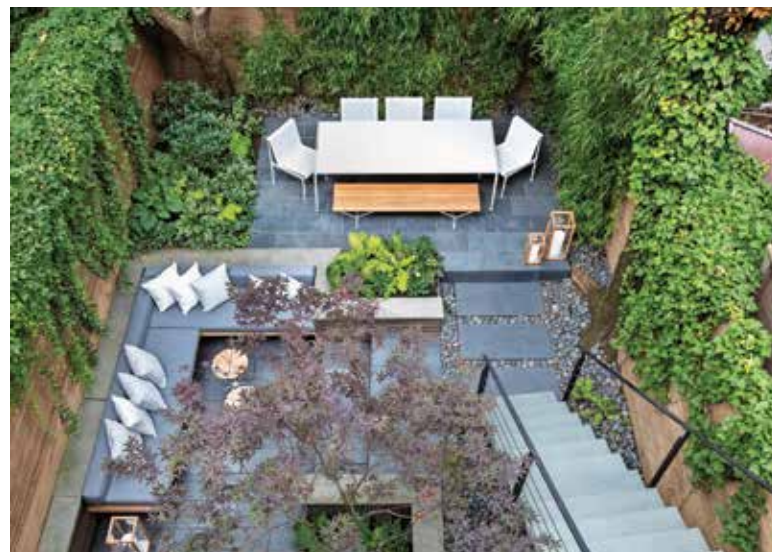
principles, although the resulting look is a bit more lush in this wetter side of the country where modernist architecture is less of a norm.

LANDSCAPE DESTINATIONS

Harrison is a fan of creating carefully curated outdoor “rooms.” Sometimes garden rooms are defined by walls or other clearly delineated boundaries and serve as a destination in the landscape — a way to individualize a garden and divide up the space according to practical purposes. Those purposes could include outdoor grilling, herb growing, sun-tanning, bird-watching or just kicking back and enjoying the views.

Although the term “minimalist” is not likely to be applied to Harrison Green designs, the firm exercises restraint in form, texture and color.

“I like to remind our clients that green is a color,” says Harrison. “Green is the first and most important color in your garden, and sometimes you don’t even need to go far beyond that to create a really incredible space,” she adds, listing its many



Green is a prominent color that can anchor any outdoor design or even stand alone, says Jacqueline Harrison of the New York-based Harrison Green landscaping firm.

NICHOLAS CALCOTT (2); GETTY IMAGES

Outdoor rooms, like this one at a home on New York’s Upper West Side can be defined by walls that create distinct spaces for grilling, gardening, relaxing or other activities.

shades from lime and chartreuse to jade and olive. Shades of burgundy, red and brown are also options. Add variegated foliage to the mix and it’s possible to paint a vibrant image without employing a single blossom.

“Flowers are the icing on the cake,” says Harrison. “It’s the trees, shrubs and other large elements that you build the

landscape with.”

She encourages her clients to start the brainstorming process by making a ranked list of the things they want and need in the space, along with photos that capture the way they want it to feel. These can be gleaned online, though she urges people to go out in nature, or at least their neighborhood, and snap photos of

landscapes they like.

“What do you respond to? And why? Do you like the color? The texture? Do you like the privacy that something provides?” Most importantly, she says, go for what feels like you. “For us, the design of a garden starts with the clients themselves. Their personal style is what informs our process. Because a garden is a very personal thing.” ■

Don't let weed woes take root

A patch of bare earth speckled with scraggly half-dead weeds can seem like an impossible situation to remedy. But there’s a simple solution to almost any unkempt garden space. Consider covering the area with landscape fabric, also referred to as weed cloth, holding down the edges with metal stakes (sold at most garden centers), making sure to overlap each piece by at least 6 inches. Then cut small holes just big enough to plant small groundcover “plugs.” These species, including succulents such as sedum and trailing vines such as ivy, are typically sold in small containers, but they grow quickly to cover large areas. Ask your local nursery about native species that will thrive in your region.



sedum



ivy