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DESIGNING FOR THEME
Pro Tips
Northwest Flower & Garden Festival

Few other design principles can deliver a more impactful garden experience than creating a compelling theme. Explore the design process and learn from case studies on how to create captivating, thought-provoking and memorable garden spaces that are built around an organizing, storytelling principle.

Narrative

- If you cannot describe the finished garden in words, you cannot design the garden
- Tell a story, make a statement, define a collection or satisfy a want or need
- The simpler the narrative the better
- Keep it short, two or three paragraphs is ideal

Order

- Document, study and analyze the site for specific uses, opportunities and challenges
- Define a generalized solution to those qualities that fit the language of the narrative
- Assign length, width and height to those solutions
- Arrange those solutions on the site using the documented site analysis

Unity

- Focal point/dominance
- Repetition
- Interconnection

Mystery & Legibility

- Hiding portions of the garden creates mystery
- Revealing the garden creates legibility
- Too much mystery can be discouraging, forbidding or frustrating
- Too much legibility can be obvious, disengaging or boring

Complexity & Simplicity

- Greater number of unique items creates complexity
- Fewer number of unique items creates simplicity
- Too many unique items can look cluttered, busy or confusing
- Too few unique items can look sparse, uninspired or incomplete

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Case study: Lap Pool in a Meadow

Private residence in mid-Atlantic region, USDA Zone 6b (borderline 7a), with moderately sloping (3-8%) silt loam soil. Annual average rainfall is approximately 42 inches per year.



Plant Type	Botanical Name	Common Name
Conifers	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> 'Idyllwild'	Idyllwild Juniper
Conifers	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> 'Smaragd' (Emerald Green)	Emerald Green arborvitae
Ornamental Grass	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> 'Blonde Ambition' PP22048	Blonde Ambition blue grama
Ornamental Grass	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania sedge
Ornamental Grass	<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	Fox sedge
Ornamental Grass	<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i> 'Goldtau'	Goldtau Tufted Hair Grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Juncus effusus</i> 'Blue Arrows'	Blue Arrows rush
Ornamental Grass	<i>Molinia caerulea</i> subsp. <i>arundinacea</i> 'Skyracer'	Skyracer Purple Moor Grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Nassella tenuissima</i>	Mexican Feather Grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Dallas Blues' P.P.# 11202	Dallas Blues Switch Grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Northwind'	Northwind switchgrass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Shenandoah'	Shenandoah switchgrass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> 'Hameln'	Dwarf Fountain Grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> 'The Blues'	The Blues Little Bluestem
Ornamental Grass	<i>Sesleria autumnalis</i>	Autumn Moor Grass
Perennials	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> 'Paprika'	Paprika Common Yarrow
Perennials	<i>Amsonia hubrichtii</i>	Hubricht's bluestar
Perennials	<i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i> var. <i>salicifolia</i>	Eastern bluestar
Perennials	<i>Anemone x hybrida</i> 'Honorine Jobert'	Honorine Jobert Japanese Anemone
Perennials	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	Blue wild indigo
Perennials	<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> 'Zagreb'	Zagreb Threadleaf Tickseed

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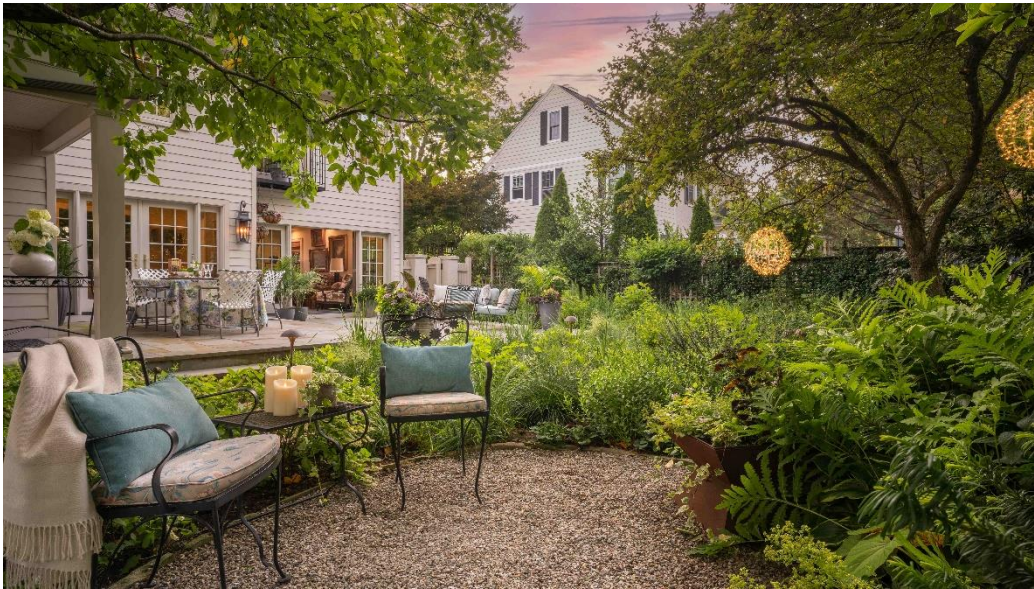
Perennials	Echinacea purpurea 'Hot Papaya'	Hot Papaya Coneflower
Perennials	Eryngium yuccifolium	Rattlesnake-master
Perennials	Eupatorium purpureum ssp. maculatum 'Gateway'	Gateway Joe Pye Weed
Perennials	Gaillardia x 'Arizona Sun'	Arizona Sun Blanket Flower
Perennials	Helianthus angustifolius	Narrowleaf sunflower
Perennials	Iris pseudacorus	Yellow Flag
Perennials	Iris sibirica 'Caesar's Brother'	Caesar's Brother Siberian Iris
Perennials	Lavandula x intermedia 'Phenomenal'	Lavender
Perennials	Liatris spicata	Blazing star
Perennials	Nepeta x faassenii 'Six Hills Giant'	Six Hills Giant Catmint
Perennials	Penstemon digitalis 'Husker Red'	Husker Red beardtongue
Perennials	Perovskia atriplicifolia	Russian Sage
Perennials	Phlox paniculata 'David'	David Garden Phlox
Perennials	Rudbeckia fulgida var. fulgida	Orange Coneflower
Perennials	Rudbeckia maxima	Coneflower
Perennials	Salvia nemorosa 'Ostfriesland'	East Friesland meadow sage
Perennials	Salvia verticillata 'Purple Rain'	Purple Rain sage
Perennials	Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks'	Fireworks Goldenrod
Perennials	Veronicastrum virginicum	Culver's root
Shrubs	Aesculus parviflora	Bottlebrush Buckeye
Shrubs	Buxus x 'Green Mountain'	Green Mountain Boxwood
Shrubs	Callicarpa dichotoma	Purple Beautyberry
Shrubs	Calycanthus floridus	Carolina Allspice
Shrubs	Clethra alnifolia 'Sixteen Candles'	Sixteen Candles Summersweet
Shrubs	Fothergilla gardenii	Dwarf fothergilla
Shrubs	Hydrangea paniculata 'Limelight' P.P.# 12874	Limelight panicle hydrangea
Shrubs	Ilex glabra 'Compacta'	Compact Inkberry Holly
Shrubs	Ilex verticillata 'Winter Red'	Winter Red Winterberry
Shrubs	Juniperus chinensis 'Hetzii Columnaris'	Green columnar juniper
Shrubs	Viburnum nudum 'Winterthur'	Winterthur smooth viburnum

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Case study: Drainage Problem is No Problem

Private residence in mid-Atlantic region, USDA Zone 7a, with Urban Land soils. Annual average rainfall is approximately 42 inches per year.



Plant Type	Botanical Name	Common Name
Ornamental Grass	<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i> 'Karl Foerster'	Foerster's feather reed grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Carex laxiculmus</i> 'HOBB' Bunny Blue	Bunny Blue sedge
Ornamental Grass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> 'Goldtau'	Golden Dew tufted hair grass
Ornamental Grass	<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> 'Hameln'	Dwarf fountain grass
Perennials	<i>Amsonia x 'Blue Ice'</i>	Blue Ice bluestar
Perennials	<i>Aster</i> 'Wood's Blue'	Wood's Blue New York aster
Perennials	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	Blue wild indigo
Perennials	<i>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides</i>	Plumbago
Perennials	<i>Eupatorium dubium</i> 'Little Joe' (syn. <i>Eutrochium</i>)	Little Joe Pye weed
Perennials	<i>Geranium x 'Rozanne'</i>	Rozanne cranesbill
Perennials	<i>Hemerocallis</i> 'Strawberry Candy'	Strawberry Candy daylily
Perennials	<i>Iris sibirica</i> 'Caesar's Brother'	Caesar's Brother Siberian iris
Perennials	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Blazing star
Perennials	<i>Pycnanthemum muticum</i>	Clustered mountainmint
Perennials	<i>Sedum spurium</i> 'John Creech'	John Creech stonecrop
Shrubs	<i>Cephalotaxus harringtonia</i> 'Duke Gardens'	Duke Gardens Japanese plum yew
Shrubs	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> 'Hummingbird'	Hummingbird summersweet
Shrubs	<i>Ilex glabra</i> 'Gem Box'	Gem Box Inkberry Holly
Shrubs	<i>Itea virginica</i> 'Little Henry' ('Sprich')	Little Henry sweetspire
Shrubs	<i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i> 'Zeblid' (Scarletta)	Scarletta fetterbush
Shrubs	<i>Weigela florida</i> 'Spilled Wine'	Spilled Wine weigela

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