

Creating a Personal Paradise Outdoors with Feng Shui

Feng Shui, the Chinese system of environmental placement, sees the world as completely alive with everything, including buildings, streets and property, interconnected in a dynamic relationship that affects everything we experience. Practicing Feng Shui outdoors nourishes the supply of Ch'i (vital energy) flowing around and into your home or workplace. This increase of vital Ch'i then nurtures and enhances important aspects of your life including your health, relationships, happiness, and prosperity.

Create Whole Shapes

Many Western structures are built in “S”, “U”, “T”, “L,” and other shapes that give them architectural interest. However, in Feng Shui, whole shapes, such as squares and rectangles, are considered best for housing human health and happiness. If you live or work in a building with an “interesting” shape do your best to fill in and complete its overall shape in some way. You can add a room or combine features such as patios, fencing, decks, arbors, plants, boulders, statuary, and water fountains, to “square off” and complete the building’s shape.

I often see “L” shaped homes with the attached garage built toward the street as one leg of the “L”, while the rest of the house forms the other leg of the “L.” This is challenging for three reasons. First, the garage is prominent and tends to influence the residents to live at a “driving” pace. Second, the front door entrance is recessed, diminishing its importance as the primary Gate of Welcome. And third, the “L” shape leaves areas missing that in Feng Shui, relates to important aspects of life.

Create an Embrace

The original Feng Shui practitioners knew to honor peoples’ preference for a balance between extremes. They located buildings in what we call, the “seat of the armchair.” The seat represents the building site, while the back and the arms symbolize natural protective features rising in back and around the sides of the property, like mountains, hills, and forests. The front of the property or foot of the chair, drops below the building site to water, such as a lake, stream, or pond. This places the building between the extreme forces of wind and water, in the embrace of natural features, and with a visual command of the front of the property.

Though most of our homes are not in such auspicious locations, there are many ways we can create a similar embrace. Hardy evergreen hedges and trees, as well as berms and fencing combine to form natural protection in back and along side our yards. In front, we can install water features - from birdbaths to exotic waterfalls and ponds. We can create beautiful views from our doors and windows, privatizing and beautifying our yards to nurture us with color, fragrance, and vitality.

Create Elemental Balance

After our buildings' shape is balanced, and the property is embraced in natural beauty, we can look with an elemental eye at what we have created. In Feng Shui, the five elements of Wood, Water, Fire, Metal and Earth reside within us. Therefore, to bring them into our outer environment can be deeply healing for us.

When landscaping with the five elements, include one or more items from each category:

WOOD ELEMENT

Plants
Wooden furniture, decks, fencing, pathways
Rattan, wicker
Stripes, floral prints
Columnar, long, thin shapes
Blues, greens

FIRE ELEMENT

Lighting, including oil, electrical, candles
Fireplaces, barbecues
Pets, wildlife
Statuary, garden art depicting people, animals
Triangular, conical shapes
Reds

EARTH ELEMENT

Brick, tile, adobe
Earthenware pots, garden art
Square and rectangular shapes
Yellows, Earthtones

METAL ELEMENT

Metal furniture, fencing, statuary
Rocks, stones, sand
Circular, oval, arched shapes
White, Pastels

WATER ELEMENT

Water features
Reflective surfaces (glass, crystal, mirrors)
Asymmetrical, free form shapes
Black, Dark tones

Obviously, most gardens start with an abundance of the Wood Element represented by plants and trees. It's the other four elements that we often need to complete the

picture. Many objects can also add multiple elements. A red wooden chair mixes Fire and Wood; a square iron table with a glass top integrates Earth, Metal, and Water. Imagine these placed together outdoors, and you've brought the five elements together. You can plant red, yellow, white, blue and dark purple flowers; create a sculpture garden that suggests Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood; add lighting, tiles, boulders, water features, and trees.

You are the artist, and the land around you awaits your personal touch. Enjoy creating a personal paradise that nourishes you, your home and all those who are fortunate enough to live near you!

Additional Landscape Guidelines

1. Include a path that is designed to lead people to the front door.
2. Use protective landscaping in the front of buildings located on busy streets, cul-de-sacs, or T-junctions.
3. Install gates or open-up side yard fencing so that the Ch'i can circulate around the entire building.
4. When the building is comprised of straight lines and angles, choose meandering lines for pathways, patios, garden walls, etc.
5. Create aesthetically pleasing storage areas for trash containers, lumber, garden supplies, etc. Don't allow these items to collect and become junk piles.
6. Lift properties that are located below street level with strong horizontal lines such as terraces, and strong vertical lines such as trees, flagpoles, walls, etc. Lighting can also be used to strengthen horizontal and vertical lines. Same applies to properties that slope down in the back.

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