

## **Feng Shui for the Garden**

One of the earliest meanings of feng shui is the study of climate, geology and vegetation. It was thousands of years ago in China that the seeds of this natural science were sown.

Natural climatic conditions such as wind and water were viewed as sacred signs that were looked upon by shamans as ways to help determine the most auspicious places for houses, altars and graves. When ideal spaces were not attainable, their search for remedies led to the ideology of feng shui, blending Taoism, astronomy, alchemy, astrology and shamanism.

Feng shui is about the flow of chi and how it affects the human energy field. Taoism is about the unity of humanity and nature (the Tao). Combining the two, it became apparent that having comfortable and harmonious environments helped inhabitants to survive and thrive.

Today, most folks have a tendency to focus on feng shui for home interiors. A garden, however, can be viewed as our outdoor home. It is a beautiful representation of using the principles of feng shui to achieve the Tao connection.

In a feng shui garden, it is important to focus on the following key aspects.

### **Connectedness -- Tao**

To begin, make a list of the vegetation that you fondly recall from your childhood. This will result in positive associations that bring about feelings of comfort and belonging. Only choose plants that you love and are comfortable caring for. A high maintenance garden will result in additional stress in your life.

If you have a shed, treat it as if it were a room in your house and discard whatever is broken or unused. Clutter is a huge Tao disconnect and sheds are easy places for us to store all that stuff that we just don't know what to do with. Without creeping too far from the garden area, the same applies to your garage!

### **Balance -- Yin/Yang and Five Elements**

From a yin and yang perspective, maintain a balance between sparseness and overgrowth. Be knowledgeable about plants that require sun and consider those that are happy with shade. Flower colors in the yang family are red, orange, yellow and white. Blue, purple, violet and pink have yin energy. There is more to the beauty of flowers than meets the eye. A 10-month study performed by Rutgers University in NJ indicated that flowers can minimize depression and have a long term positive effect on moods. It stands to reason that we send bouquets to friends and loved ones who are not feeling well or to celebrate happy occasions.

In feng shui, the world is defined by the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Each one has its own shape and color evoking different emotions. While creating your garden, ensure elemental balance.

### **Wood**

Rectangular

Green

Growth & change

Examples: plants, decks, fences

### **Fire**

Triangular

Red

Action and motivation

Examples: lighting, candles, barbeques

### **Earth**

Square

Beige, terra cotta, shades of brown

Safety & stability

Examples: clay, brick and tile

### **Metal**

Round

Grey, white, silver

Clarity & focus

Examples: furniture, stones, sculptures

### **Water**

Undulating, irregular shapes

Blue, black

Acceptance & flexibility

Examples: fountains, ponds

### **Energy -- Chi**

A still landscape has no life. Use movement and sound to activate chi through the use of a wind chime or mobile, bird bath or bird feeder. To further encourage wildlife, include plants that attract birds, butterflies or hummingbirds. Healthy vegetation is a must have. Keep your beds tidy and be sure to remove and replace any dead or dying trees/shrubs. Replace cracked pots or planters. Chi comes into our homes thru windows and doors so let it be positive chi. Conversely, if the garden is full of junk, weeds and stale energy then this negativity will make its way into your home!

Use taller plants and shrubs to help protect your property from severe weather, promote privacy and block out any threatening or visually

unappealing objects that face the property. Be careful not to have bushes or trees that are too close to the house blocking window views. Not only does this result in stagnant chi but it cuts off our Tao connection.

Include a threshold to your garden to provide a welcoming feeling and separate public domain from private. This can be done through an arbor, trellis, ceramic pots or pillars. The use of borders helps to define space. Consider that indoor rooms need walls and create an edge.

Circular stepping stones get the chi flowing. Round shapes have metal energy; in the Traditional Chinese Medicine creative element cycle, metal makes water, which represents abundance. A meandering path is more inviting so it is best to incorporate curved pathways. To mitigate the effects of a straight path, place potted plants on either side of the walkway.

The sight of a hammock instantly provokes feelings of relaxation. Provide various areas for seating -- a small bench for meditative purposes, two chairs for a more intimate setting or a table for social gatherings or dining. Random seating sends the message that it is ok to sit, relax and stay a while.

A vegetable garden offers us the opportunity to eat foods that are not contaminated by chemicals and herbicides. Another option not to be overlooked is the enjoyment of herbal fragrances. In addition to their aromatic properties, they can also be used for medicinal purposes. Lavender has a calming effect, basil is known to relieve headaches and sinus problems, while jasmine can aid with depression.

Gardening is an outward and visible expression of our inner selves. It is all about connecting with our environment by tuning into our intuition and using our five senses of hearing, smelling, tasting, seeing and touching to create a place to unite with nature, meditate, relax, or laugh and dine with friends. By designing with the principles of feng shui, we can have gardens that support us physically, spiritually and emotionally.