



1711 King Street • Santa Cruz, California 95060
www.pwlandscapedesign.com • pwalters@pwlandscapedesign.com
831-458-1307 fax • 831-458-1305 phone

Getting Started with Your Landscape

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Having difficulty visualizing your ideal garden? Try taking this survey to help clarify your thoughts and get your creative juices flowing.

To start, think about the style of garden you'd like. I've described just a few popular garden styles below. Of course, your final garden doesn't have to include every item listed in the style description. And it's OK to mix and match features from different categories. That's a style, too!

Mediterranean: Gray green plants. Olive trees, rosemary, lavender, herbs. Italian tile accents, blue-tile fountains. Citrus in terracotta pots.

South West: Sculptural cactus, succulents, bougainvillea. Crushed gravel, flagstone, adobe tile, stucco. Dry riverbeds.

English Country Garden: Roses, lavender and clipped boxwood. Lots and lots of flowers. White picket fences and arbors. Brick.

Japanese: Maple trees, bamboo, azaleas, rhododendrons, ferns, moss. Quiet and calm. Simple water features and striking natural accents.

Tropical: Lush deep greens. Banana plants, cannas, palms, tropical vines, gardenias. Hot colors. Jungle fragrances.

Native: Plants and trees indigenous to our area like manzanita, ceanothus, oak, salvia, blue-eyed grass, penstemon. Drought-tolerant. Butterflies, hummingbirds, other wildlife.

Once you've got some ideas about your preferred garden style, ask yourself some practical, non-style questions as well like these: Besides looking good, what does your garden need to do for you? That is, do you want to fit in entertainment areas, play areas, a vegetable garden or fruit trees?

Are there any views that need blocking? Any that deserve enhancing?

Do you have any specific plant allergies?

How much maintenance are you willing to do or have done?

Do you have particular objects that you want to incorporate into your design like a stream, a sculpture or a hot tub?

Do you have any particular problems with pests like deer, squirrels, gophers or neighborhood pets?

This survey is by no means exhaustive, but by getting some of your ideas down on paper, you'll be a step closer to the garden you want.