



Landscape Design

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Finding Garden Inspiration

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Fall. The perfect time to plant. The perfect time to update your garden. But what to do? When I'm looking for inspiration, I turn to some of the following resources.

First off the bookshelf is my Sunset "Western Landscaping" book. Full of themed gardens and lots of color pictures, it's a good way to start the creative juices flowing. I'll also log onto Monrovia.com. Newly redesigned, this website actually has a section called "inspiration." And my "Plants and Landscapes for Summer-Dry Climates of the San Francisco Bay Region," by East Bay Municipal Utility District is dog-eared, post-it noted and falling apart from use.

If you're in the mood for some local field trips, there is no end to inspirational venues in the Bay Area. On the Peninsula, don't miss Hakone Gardens in Saratoga for the quintessential Japanese garden, and Elizabeth Gamble Gardens in Palo Alto for beautiful historic old-fashioned gardens and regular garden workshops.

If you're looking for inspiration with California native plants, you are in good company: there are extensive demonstration gardens at Foothill College in Los Altos; De Anza College in Cupertino; Stanford University and San Jose State University. (There is also a newly published book called "Designing California Native Gardens," by Keator and Middlebrook, with lots of color pictures and both plant and design ideas.)

Over by the ocean, UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Sierra Azul Nursery and Gardens in Watsonville showcase stunning examples of drought-tolerant planting, and Half Moon Bay nursery attracts idea-seekers from around the Bay Area.

In the East Bay, a total gem of a garden is the Ruth Bancroft Gardens in Walnut Creek: 2+ acres of spectacular succulents and dry gardening possibilities and the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden is a world-renowned 34 acres of garden inspiration.

So, in the comfort of your own home or out on the road, inspiration is all around you. Go for it and get planting!