



## Grow an Evening Garden

**Carve out a blissful sanctuary for nights filled with peace and quiet by planting an evening garden.**

Don't let summer nights keep you indoors. Create a sitting area in your evening garden with a firepit, chimnea or cauldron to keep your toes warm. An evening garden is the perfect place to prop up your feet at the end of a busy day. The garden is a retreat, filled with calming sounds, lovely fragrances of flowers and moonlit beauty. A well-designed evening garden delivers stillness and harmony without tacking more stuff on the to-do list.

As dusk ends and darkness descends, take a bit of time to breathe. Spend that time in a garden that's uplifting and inspiring, instead of in front of the television. Creating an evening garden on your farm builds serenity into your landscape, and it's easier than you think.

### Garden Heaven

To craft an evening garden that simply oozes with repose, start with a prime location, not a large size. Granted, the garden should be big enough to include a few of the necessary elements, but it needn't be overwhelming to create or maintain. Smaller, more intimate gardens naturally lend themselves to relaxation. They envelop you and narrow your senses more than large, open spaces. "If you don't have a lot of space, you can even create an evening garden on a tiny patio with a few potted plants or on a balcony or a deck," notes garden designer Martha Swiss. But if you've got the space, consider creating a larger garden.

"Picture a small meadow with grasses, white coneflowers, daisies and other white flowers," Swiss says. "It would look fantastic under a starlit sky!"

Most evening gardens will fall somewhere between tiny patio and meadow. Scale the garden to your outdoor living space and tailor its size to suit your own needs. Swiss also says that wooded properties lend themselves quite nicely to an evening garden.

"Plant the primary part of the garden around a living space, then use some of the same plants farther out into the woods to make the garden seem to recede into the darkness, giving a bigger sense of space and melting the garden right into the woods," she says.

Whenever possible, locate the main body of your evening garden close to the back door or down a short, softly lit path so that the journey becomes part of its appeal. Situating your evening garden too far away may mean a spilled glass of wine along your journey to the garden or, worse still, fewer visits.

Privacy is also a significant consideration when determining the placement of your garden.

"This is really important for establishing a space that feels like an oasis," Swiss says.

She relies on several techniques to achieve privacy, and the one you use depends on how much space you have, what you can afford, and whether you need light or heavy screening.

"Fencing is one way to achieve privacy, but it can be expensive. It can also feel cold and may (or may not) improve relations with your neighbors." Covering a fence, lattice or pergola with flowering vines softens their hard edges and helps conceal their rigidity.

"Columnar evergreens are a screening option, too—as long as you don't line them up like soldiers—but my favorite way to garner some privacy is to use ornamental grasses. They are soft and sway beautifully in the breeze. Plus, they're very low maintenance," she says.

### Garden Essentials

No matter the size and location of your evening garden, there are a handful of essential components that play important roles in creating your nighttime sanctuary. A garden is physically built of plants and flowers, but an evening garden is characterized by its atmosphere, too. The core of your garden is its spirit, its tone and the mood it's designed to invoke. "The moon garden offers a temple to the senses," says Scott Ogden, author of *The Moonlit Garden* (Taylor Trade Publishing, 1998). "Like the blind, the witness to the nocturnal landscape learns more immediate ways to connect with his surroundings."

In essence, the right kinds of plants and flowers, blended with the finest trimmings, can fashion a garden to both awaken



your senses and settle your soul.

#### Foliage Plants

The backbone of most gardens, foliage plants set the stage and the backdrop for flowering plants. In the evening garden, foliage plants are also characters in their own right, especially plants with variegated foliage. Foliage plants with white- and cream-colored leaves reflect the moonlight beautifully and, in doing so, naturally lighten the evening garden.

Start by choosing a handful of trees and shrubs with dappled foliage or white blossoms. This lends height to the garden and also can be used to define the space. Add a few non-variegated evergreen plants to deepen the setting for lighter-colored flowers and to maintain interest during the winter months. If garden space is limited, dwarf conifer plants offer the same effect on a smaller scale.

These woody plants are the foundation of your evening garden, so choose carefully and don't go overboard. More is not always better.

Once your hub of trees and shrubs has been positioned, add a few foliage-only plants like perennials and grasses: grey-leaved herbs such as sage, Artemisia and Santolina; steel-blue grasses like blue oat grass, blue fescue and Panicum Heavy Metal; and the white-tinged leaves of plants like hosta, variegated Solomon's Seal and Japanese painted ferns.

Then punch in a few grey-blue accents with perennials such as false indigo, sea holly and lamb's ears, which lighten the garden even more and add significant textural notes with their respective upright, spiny and soft foliages. Mix up plant heights, foliage shapes and textural qualities to create the most favorable blend.