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Adding Beauty To Your Garden With An Arbor

By Paul Graham

Garden arbors are set up as shaded places in home gardens or public parks where one can relax

and rest. These open frameworks are typically made of latticework or rustic work, functioning also as a trellis for climbing or creeping plants. Arbors can also be constructed for decks or patios. Today's garden arbors were not the first attempt to enhance the beauty of gardens. In the 400s B.C. and A.D. 400's, elaborate courtyards were a hallmark of many Roman homes. Landscape architecture was also given a premium in Japanese gardens (A.D. 500's) and Persian gardens (A.D.200's-600's). Beauty was also a priority for civic plazas and hillside estates for Italians in the 1400's-1500's. City gardens and majestic palaces were the highlight of France during the 1600's and 1700's, while country estates with a natural look were the main theme followed by English designers in the 1800's.

1. Landscape Architecture

For a good number of these early country estates and gardens, designers were known as landscape gardeners. An American – Frederick Law Olmsted – was the first to use 'landscape architect'. He indicated this title when he approved design plans for Manhattan's Central Park in New York City with Calvert Vaux as his partner in the 1850's. Landscape architecture is not limited to major projects. Some homeowners tap the services of professionals to add beauty to their gardens. However, others now feel confident in do-it-yourself projects as a cost-effective alternative to make their gardens beautiful.

2. Use Quality Materials

Creating a small garden arbor is an easy task, with costs becoming significantly less if the homeowner is patient enough to shop around and compare prices, particularly for pressure-treated lumber. Other items that may vary slightly across discount stores in price terms are deck screws, scrap lumber, crushed stone or gravel, washers, bolts and nuts. The same principles apply to building larger arbors, although some ideas and items would tend to increase in scale. As an example, using two posts for a small arbor may mean using four posts for a large one, as a bigger arbor would need greater support for strength and stability, and also to enhance alignment.

3. Designing a Garden Arbor: Some Do-It-Yourself Fundamentals

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- To stabilize the arbor, the homeowner should have the main posts of the structure sunk into concrete poured into holes below the garden's ground level.
- The carpenter's level is used to determine if the posts stand at equal heights. The tool is also used to establish plumbness, or if the posts are vertically 'level.'
- Wooden crosspieces in varying measurements can be attached perpendicular to the posts for further support.
- Since some rejects still make their way to lumber stores, one should be patient enough to sort through many boards until a good quality board is found.
- Buyers should remember that conventional measurements are not exact: a 4 by 4 may actually

measure 3.5 by 3.5, while 2 by 4 may measure 1.5 by 3.5.

- The same consideration for post height must also be given, as part of the arbor posts will be underground. Galvanized post anchors is one option homeowners have if they intends to make use of the post's full height – or have all posts above ground level – for their garden.

4. Tools For Do-It-Yourself Projects

These will actually cost a lot more if one does not have the necessary tools at home for building garden arbors.

- Circular saw or handsaw – Stepladder – Wheelbarrow – Hammer – Wrench – Spade bit – Garden hose – Carpenter's level – Shovel – Drill – File – Wood chisel

5. Building Tips

- Arbor boards can already be pre-drilled and pre-cut as a time-saving step.
- The wooden crosspieces can be designed at the ends. Patterns can be drawn using a pencil and later cut using a jigsaw.

For more great garden arbor related articles and resources check out

<http://arbors.lawnngardens.com>

The Iron Arbor

By Daniel Roshard

A metal arbor can be used as a focal point for any garden. They can be constructed from almost any

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malleable metal, but the most common ones are wrought iron arbors. The intricacy of the wrought ironwork can be extremely simple, or incredibly complex. There really is one to suit any taste and pocket.

The majority of metal arbors are used to encourage climbing plants to form a shaded area. Many people install an iron arbor and plant climbing rose bushes all around the closed areas to form a wonderfully fragrant and shaded seating area. A metal arbor traditionally has only one open side, unlike a pergola or archway. That is why it is more suited for use as a shaded seating area.

Iron arbors, or any type of metal arbor, are extremely heavy constructions. They are usually set in concrete and are seldom repositioned. It is not very practical to set a metal arbor on soft ground or grass. The wrought iron arbor is likely to sink into the surface. For the same reason, metal arbors are not often moved. There is a lot of effort required in changing the position of an established iron arbor so it is worth planning its location carefully.

The variety of styles and sizes of metal arbors that are available means that the prices vary dramatically, too. The cheapest ones are under \$100, but there is no limit to how much the most expensive might be. Many wrought iron arbors are handcrafted, which adds to the cost, but ensures that it is unlike any other metal arbor. The length of time that a commissioned iron arbor will take to finish also varies with the intricacy of the metalwork involved.

Caring for an iron arbor really depends on personal preference. If you want your metal arbor to be gleaming and new for life, it will need rust treatments and repainting when appropriate. However, many owners of metal arbors prefer to leave it to the elements. This produces a lovely rusted antique look to the iron arbor. Of course, if you are encouraging climbing shrubs to cover the metal arbor then you will not be able to, or want to, perform any maintenance on the iron arbor itself. It is possible to buy iron arbors that have come from other gardens and have already acquired the weathered appearance, but these are few and far between.

Creating a metal arbor is not something that the average DIY enthusiast is likely to be able to do. The skills involved are metalwork and welding, at the very least. The most ornate of wrought iron arbors can only be produced by skilled metalworkers and craftsmen. The most beautiful metal arbors are those that have been in situ for a number of years and have fragrant roses entwined in their intricate ironwork. These iron arbors can give the owner a truly calming place of refuge from the hustle and bustle of today.

Daniel Roshard is an interior designer fascinated by outdoor architecture, he is currently studying public parks and outdoor design. Daniel is writing articles about home improvement and landscaping issues at

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