

Winter Gardens

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“See as much beauty in the steel-lined engravings of winter as in the watercolours of spring or the oil paintings of summer.”

— Vita Sackville-West

THE LONG PERIOD OF WINTER dormancy leads many of us to yearn for spring’s reprieve; however, there is a wealth of unexpected beauty to behold at this time of year, including right in your own backyard. Perhaps it is time to take a different look — an appreciative look — at the subtle, quiet pleasures that nature unfolds during this time. I encourage you to celebrate the winter garden.

A beautiful garden in winter is the absolute test of a beautiful year-round garden. Fair-weather gardens could be compared to fair-weather friends, delightful in balmy temperatures but disappointingly absent in times of inclement weather. Winter is a time when a garden can indeed

show its strength of character through a combination of solid structure, wonderful plants and delightful garden ornaments. The magical gardens — those that evoke the strongest emotions — all contain these three basic elements: structure, plants and ornament.

Structural Integrity

The framework or bones of the garden, alive or not, are the garden’s permanent foundation features. Stone patios and pathways; a rectangular reflecting pond; a rose-trellised wooden arbour; living plants such as cedar hedges, and boxwood edging; an allée of trees; or a circular bed of grass: all these are the features that command our attention; they stand out and catch the eye even in the winter months.

Plant Material

The silhouette or shape of plants is especially noticeable in winter. Snow has a way of emphasizing the branches, berries and seed heads with

grace and majestic interplay. The mixture of shapes, from a vase-shaped birch to a columnar cedar or spiky grass, all add interest and variety of form to the garden composition. The pyramidal sky-blue



Evergreen hedges provide a backdrop and enclosure for the snowy landscape



Evergreens offer sculptural support for winter snow



A Winter Still Life: wood, snow, and a frozen rosebud.