



# GUIDELINES *for* HEALING GARDENS

**ALEX STARK**

CREATING OUTSTANDING ENVIRONMENTS  
WITH GEOMANCY & FENG SHUI

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**Geomancy** is the art of creating Harmony, Health and Fortune in everyday life. It achieves this by manipulating the physical placement of objects (rocks, plants, gates, walls, equipment) in space as well as the invisible energies associated with those objects. Its goal is to make life healthier and more conducive to the achievement of personal wholeness.

**Geomancy is also useful for enhancing** personal success in private and public life, as well as for improving relationships, health, joyfulness, creativity, career, reputation, prosperity, self-knowledge, and spirituality. It achieves this by maximizing positive energetic potential while simultaneously minimizing negative or destructive factors.

**A harmonious, well balanced environment** liberates creativity and vitality. It also helps to enhance the healing experience and works to support good health and physical well-being. Because geomancy is a holistic discipline, health is never seen in isolation, but rather as the result of harmony and balance in life as well as in the energy of the spaces in which we live and work.

**The following set of guidelines** outlines basic considerations for the design and evaluation of healing gardens and outdoor spaces. These are to be taken only as a guide, as the practice of geomancy involves many analytical tools which are beyond the scope of this document. For optimal results, always consult with a professional practitioner.

**GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Nature does not depend on gardens. Humans, on the other hand, can use gardens to bring us closer to the nurturing and healing power of Nature.
- All creation and transformation requires a container. A garden is a sacred enclosure where the healing and recuperative process can unfold.
- A successful healing garden requires that its users and creators relinquish control to the forces of Nature. This includes relinquishing control over gardening theories, educational ideas, technological shortcuts, hybrid forms, fertilizers, and, more importantly, our own expectations.
- A healing garden is a link to the divine, to the creative force of the Cosmos. It is therefore beyond horticultural techniques and intellectual preoccupations and should reflect this role in its attitude of compassion and care.
- A healing garden is a microcosmos of the larger world: each feature in the garden has the power to represent a larger feature in the landscape: mountains, rivers, lakes. It is through this holistic modeling that a healing garden can stimulate the senses, improve immune response, and promote recuperation from physical and emotional illness.
- A successful healing garden is a co-creative process in which humans and Nature are intimately connected through the bonds of reciprocity and stewardship. A healing gardener is a keeper of a sacred place. Its users can access higher levels of spiritual power by their simple presence in its space.
- A healing garden is a symbol of the possibilities, obstacles, and hardships that need to be overcome in order to reach higher levels of consciousness and a sense of our own divinity. This potential allows a successful garden to have a healing role even in those situations where physical healing is not possible.
- A healing garden needs to work with Nature and its forms: it should discourage rigidity, conceptual thinking, and preconceived notions of design. Its design needs to avoid straight lines, sheer volumes and planes, and excessive use of symmetry.
- The design of a healing garden must consider creation in its three forms: aesthetic, spiritual, and social.
- Aesthetic creation can be achieved through artful manipulation of physical elements, color, light, tone, and feeling. It is a result of careful compositional skills and must recognize the polarities present in nature. Aesthetic creation runs the spectrum from formal to wild, and each version will serve a specific purpose, illness, or person.
- Spiritual creation is achieved through careful alignment with the forces of earth, water, air and fire. It implies a recognition of orientation in space in a cosmological sense, and of the anthropocosmic relationship between man and the larger body of the planet, its creatures, and the invisible forces behind material reality. It can also include formal religious allusions as well as iconographic additions. Its end product is a space where many activities are possible: stillness/movement, contemplation/interaction, wonder/discovery, mystery/creation, relaxation/work.
- Social creation includes the interaction of patients with healers, family and friends, the old with the young, staff and colleagues, and even the act of being in solitude. In all cases, however, there is also the interaction of humans and nature: plants, wildlife, and the forces of wind, water, light, and color.

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**GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES.**

*A healing garden, by the very nature of its function, ethically obligates its designer to subordinate his personal tastes to the task of creating a user-centered, supportive environment for healing.*

- A healing garden should afford opportunities to make choices: private areas and public spaces, contemplation and people watching, various walking routes, different kinds of seating, interaction with nature, and more.
- A healing garden should allow users to experience a sense of control: users must know it exists, how to gain access to it, they should be able to use it in ways they prefer, and be involved in its design and maintenance.
- A healing garden should create opportunities that encourage people to gather together in order to experience social contact and support. The garden needs to provide subspaces and seating arrangements that allow gathering in larger groups. It needs natural, spatially enclosed settings for talk and conversation.
- A healing garden should also create opportunities for smaller interactions: one-on-one conversation or quiet contemplation.
- Design needs to create opportunities for movement and exercise; this brings physical and emotional benefits and helps to combat depression. Create paths for walking, make the garden visible from corridors that can also be used for exercise, place rehabilitation units in view of the garden or nature, add a walking or jogging route for staff. Remember to allow spaces for well-children to let off steam and interact with adults.
- Design should encourage clarity of layout and movement. Avoid dead end paths and complex formations.
- If possible, the garden should be clearly visible from many locations: allow views of the garden from lobbies, corridors, staff or patient rooms. Provide way-finding signage.
- It should provide easy accessibility: place nurse stations with view and access to the garden. Make sure width and materials of the pathways, stairs and lifts are usable by people with infirmities and on wheel chairs.
- Design should create a sense of psychological security by providing a sense of enclosure and protection from other's view (fishbowl effect). Sitting areas should enjoy protection from the back. Avoid sitting areas in the open without spatial relief. Allow for the possibility of napping or laying on the grass.
- It should create a sense of physical security: provide handrails, non-skid surfaces, pavement that does not create glare. Provide sitting areas at frequent intervals, especially near the entry point.
- Design should provide physiological comfort: consider patient's special needs. Create options of sun or shade, protection from breezes, and seating that allows rising from the sitting position. Provide garden seats with backs and arms. Consider smoking needs of staff or other patients.
- A garden should create a sense of quiet and calm. Users should be able to hear birdsong, chimes and water. Control disturbances caused by road traffic, air conditioning, delivery vehicles and helicopter pads. The one exception are the well-elderly who often prefer interaction in "front porch" locations with more noise.
- Design must recognize the need for familiarity in furnishings, images, symbols and plant life. Familiarity helps to soothe and calm otherwise weary individuals.
- Design needs to provide unambiguously positive features. Avoid abstractions, aggressive shapes, pointed or angular forms. Avoid long straight lines, overwhelming volumes or masses. Think small, rounded, and natural.
- Design needs to encourage interaction with Nature: promote safe wildlife, biodiversity, and a sense of mystery.

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## CREATE A SENSE OF ENCLOSURE AND A SPECIAL ENTRANCE

*Healing gardens are by definition sacred places where its users leave their worries behind.*

*The entrance defines the boundary of the garden enclosure. A special entrance creates a safe haven and intensifies the experience of healing. It is where the garden befriends you, allowing you to enter. It also engages the imagination and allows the visitor to perceive the subtleties of what lies beyond.*

- The enclosure can be formal or implied, but it must demonstrate a sense of structure, permanence and groundedness. Simplicity is important.
- Where fencing is used it should be as natural as possible in order to differentiate it from the rest of the hospital. Structural walls need to be softened with plantings, trellises, artwork, or water features.
- Archways are effective ways of creating transitions. These can be formal or natural, and are opportunities for displaying the name of the garden or a special healing message.
- Gates can be made strong and solid or light and permeable, depending on the population served. In either case a gateway, like an archway, signals that the visitor is entering sacred ground and leaving worries behind.
- The entrance to a garden should be ordered and should allow for views into the garden without disarray or clutter. Equipment and technology should be removed or concealed from view.
- The entry should have a clear view of a focal point or an anchor feature such as a rock, a significant tree or plant grouping, a water feature, an informative sign or graphic, or a work of art.
- Not all of the garden should be visible from the entrance. This diminishes the allure and mystery of the rest and minimizes the sense of discovery and privacy that is possible otherwise. The garden's features should be revealed one at a time.
- However, in certain cases where patients may be cognitively impaired, it may be best to show the entirety of the garden at one glance. Alzheimers disease patients, for example, need to have clearly defined paths and looped trajectories that lead safely back to the main building.
- It is desirable to have the garden visible from the interior of the hospital building. This creates a sense of anticipation and also benefits those who are not able to use the garden directly. Care should be taken, however, not to create a "fishbowl effect" and compromise the privacy of the outdoor areas.
- The entry should provide sitting opportunities for taking in the garden and for those who are less firm.
- There might be need to provide additional entrances for staff or visitors. In certain cases, such as in hospice facilities, there may be need to secure access to the garden only for those directly in need.
- Color is an important way to entice the visitor into the garden. Plantings should be considered with this in mind. The play of light is also part of this display of nature and can be incorporated into its design. Bright color can increase light in a dark area and vice versa.
- Pathways leading into the garden from the entrance have the potential of creating intrigue and mystery. It is best if paths are meandering and sinuous. In a small garden meandering paths make it feel larger, more spacious and relaxed.

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## CREATE A SENSE OF MOVEMENT IN SPACE

*The pathways within the garden are representative of the personal healing journey. They have the power to create a sense of mystery, allure, achievement, or even simple familiarity. Each population's differing needs can be met most effectively through the experiences encountered in this journey.*

- Walkways need to be considered with particular populations in mind. What will serve the well-elderly may not be suitable for Alzheimer patients; a children's garden will require a radically different design from that of a hospice or sanatorium. It is important, therefore, for the design team to carefully assess the needs and characteristics of their demographics and to elaborate programs that work in concert with those needs.
- The width of pathways is a critical consideration. Whereas it is ideal to keep paths small and narrow, certain populations may require greater clearances. It may be desirable, for example, to allow access to patients in beds as part of their therapy in the garden. Wheelchairs and strollers, similarly, will also dictate other widths. Wheel chairs will similarly dictate permissible inclines and ramp profiles.
- Pathways need to consider not only the physical restrictions mentioned above, but also any psychological needs. Closed loops, for example, are desirable in populations that are cognitively impaired (such as Alzheimer), as dead ends present serious problems for this population. Children, on the other hand, take great pleasure in gardens that have hidden or "secret" places, and multi-layered spatial planes.
- Physical security should always be considered in pathway design: wheel stops for wheel chairs, railings for water features (even the most shallow can present a danger to the infirm), and potential injury due to slipping, sliding or changes in level. Protect sitting areas from excessive wind.
- In all cases, however, seating plays a fundamental role. Seating allows the journey to be broken into manageable segments, provides opportunity for contemplation, and helps to create anchor points or focal groupings that can lend the garden an air of wonder and enchantment.
- In general terms, it is best if paths are meandering and sinuous. In a small garden meandering paths make it feel larger, more spacious and relaxed. Meandering paths also help to create a sense of intimacy and calm and are very helpful in reducing stress.
- Straight paths can be concealed with stepping stones, different paving textures, or changes of level. Allow plantings to creep into the pathways.
- It is best if movement through paths can provide a variety of open and closed views. Allow for experience of differing subspaces, anchor points, special features, and other uses.
- Wherever possible, allow for a series of entrances into contiguous subspaces that create levels of discovery, attainment, and healing. This can be achieved by creating the garden as a series of "rooms" or experiences.
- Include elements of surprise and whimsy. Provide variety in color, texture, size and massing.
- Add a chapel, pavilion, or some other enclosure to provide a destination. Provide shelter where needed. Special themes can create wonderful destinations: consider giant chess or checkers, mini golf, or even iconic structures such as gazebos, basketball hoops, bird houses, or clothes lines.
- Include the influence of wind by adding wind chimes, flags, windmills, banners, or tall grasses that can sway even in light breezes. Encourage melodic natural sounds. Consider sound sculptures.
- Do not forget the power of smell: create scented environments by artful planting of flowering varieties.

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## USE THE HEALING POWER OF WATER

*Water is symbolic of the vitality of life and is key to the sacredness of a healing garden. Water can be metaphorical of peace, tranquility and calm. Conversely, it is also associated with vitality, fertility, abundance, fluidity and movement. Water opens up the contemplative nature of the soul and helps to elicit memories and a sense of belonging. Because water is a feminine energy, it is also associated with the Goddess and with the mother's womb.*

- Water can be incorporated in any of its many guises: as a gushing stream in a fountain it is symbolic of the life force (chi, prana), of surmounting obstacles, and initiating new life.
- As a slow moving, meandering stream or creek, water is symbolic of the river of life and our personal life path. It is therefore also allegorical of progress and attainment.
- As a waterfall, it is symbolic of a leap into the unknown, of courage, and triumph over fear.
- As a still pond or pool, water is symbolic of contemplation, of the soul's yearning for truth, renewal and healing.
- Water that disappears into the earth, a cave, or crevice is allegoric of the cycles of life and death and can be a reassuring symbol of our ability to overcome even the most dire circumstances.
- Adding a bridge over moving water is a powerful symbol of our ability to overcome obstacles. It also helps to define the journey within the garden and to create a sense of natural transition into a more pristine environment.
- Introduce water as early as possible in the sequential experience of the garden: a purification bowl at the entrance helps to lower stress and is symbolic of our respect for nature and the divine. This bowl can include river stones and sea shells.
- Water can be designed to encourage interaction with wildlife: songbirds, butterflies, humming birds. It is important to avoid using pesticides or chemical cleaners such as chlorine or potassium. Use only animal-approved pond liners and bird baths.
- Provide bird baths and feeders to encourage use of water features by wildlife. However, make sure you provide enough security from potential predators by setting back water stations away from other objects and by placing them in the line of normal bird flight. Include sandy soil for bird preening and digestion.
- Try to incorporate natural objects into water features: sea shells, hollow rocks, stone bowls, tree stumps.
- Provide some very shallow water for its reflective qualities: include rocks and allow some to be only partially submerged so they can act as launching pads for birds and butterflies. Encourage frogs and snails. Provide pools for fish and water lilies.
- Always provide sitting opportunities near water features both for the view as well as the sound.
- Use water features to showcase art or other anchor features: trees, rocks, or flowers. Water can enhance the drama of a particular setting and soften harder surfaces such as stone or brick.
- Design water to mask unpleasant ambient sounds. However, be conscious of the need for a natural sound: avoid plastic and metals as much as possible and make sure pumps are as sound-proof as possible.
- Hide all mechanical components, pumps, hoses, and pond liners.

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## USE THE HEALING POWER OF THE EARTH

*The Earth provides nurture and support to life; it is the foundation of all that is material. The earth is the matrix (mother) on which the creative power of life is made manifest. Rocks, trees, plants and animals are the Earth's manifestations. Careful consideration of these components will yield a garden that will greatly enhance healing and recuperation.*

- Consider the possibility of working in concert with the spirit of the land. Known as the *genius loci*, the earth's power can be tapped if you are conscious of its laws and if you pay homage and respect to its manifestations: rocks, land formations, trees and vegetation, wildlife, and the spirit that animates them.
- To achieve this include plenty of variety of plants and wildlife, incorporate seasonally different flowerings, attract wildlife with feeders, birdbaths, and edible plants, seeds, berries, and nuts. Include water features and visually interesting anchor points. Use rocks and stone to connect directly to the earth.
- Incorporate views of the sky and of the changing clouds: frame views to isolate special features of the topography or climate with greenery or architecture: connect the earth with the sky.
- Use rocks and trees to elevate the spiritual power of the healing garden. Create a landscape by using rocks and trees to simulate larger geographical regions. Think of rocks as mountains, pools as lakes, trees as sacred groves. Consider orientation, sun angles, and sequences of experience.
- Balance rock formations with water and vegetation. Use rocks as a counterpoint for larger masses of greenery. Run water through, over, and under rocks.
- Use rocks to define paths, frame flower beds, create edges and transition zones, as water features, and as altars or shrines. All of these enhance the drama of nature and provide visual relief from plants and flowers. They are also useful perches for birds, butterflies and insects.
- Create an anchor point out of a mature tree or plant grouping. Surround this with colorful flowers, a meandering pathway, and a sitting area. Encourage casual conversation under its canopy and promote social interaction in its shade. Consider a shrine as a possible use for a mature tree.
- Include reeds and grasses that move with the lightest breezes
- Create areas where you can walk directly on the earth: stone pavers, soil, pebbles, moss, wood planks, sand. Provide pathways that are accessible to the infirm and disabled through these areas. However, do not assume that all patients are disabled.
- Create sitting areas to take advantage of these rock and tree formations.
- Honor the spirit of the place by creating a shrine or place of offering. This can be a cairn (a pile of stones or crystals), an altar proper, or an icon or deity. Make offerings at this shrine on a regular basis.
- Use crystals and more precious minerals as a way of connecting to higher forms of consciousness.
- Introduce a labyrinth as a form of moving meditation.
- Add a chapel, pavilion, or some other enclosure to provide a destination or purpose. Provide shelter where needed.
- Provide for outlets of personal expression: include patients and staff in the design and creation of rock and tree features.

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## INCORPORATE A VARIETY OF SITTING AREAS

*If pathways are symbolic of the healing journey, sitting areas are the stations that mark our recuperation. Sitting areas are an essential component of a garden. They provide respite, regeneration, and an opportunity to socialize, comfort, contemplate, and enjoy.*

- Create a variety of possibilities: shady private spots for communing with trees or listening to a waterfall, more open areas where you can join others for conversation or a snack, and yet larger spaces for communal meetings, lectures or entertainment. Each of these has a valid purpose, but they should all be able to function without encroaching on each other's peace, purpose, or potential.
- Have a clear purpose or intention in mind for each sitting area. This can be for aesthetic pleasure, contemplation of wildlife, conversation, bereavement, etc. Each patient population will have its own requirements: research these needs and find ways of combining multiple uses if possible.
- Select a specific type of sitting structure for each purpose. Each type should fit the purpose not only in terms of form, but also in its materials, construction and emotional tone. Avoid plastics and generic garden furniture.
- Select views and sequential experience of each sitting area carefully: it is important to allow for time to move slowly between each sitting opportunity.
- Carefully select foundation plants, trees, and shrubs to create focal interest around sitting areas. These should work year-round or at least for 3 seasons. Winter is a powerful healing force that should not be neglected.
- Layer smaller plants, flowers, grasses, and ground cover around the focal point.
- Make sitting areas accessible: provide paths and dimension sitting elements to be usable for those with infirmities and disabilities. Provide chairs and benches with arm rests and solid backs
- Make sure the view from the sitting area is inspiring and free of clutter and congestion. Conceal larger equipment, pumps, hoses, and tools. However, a potting table or a gardener's shed is an iconic reminder of harmony with nature and could be used therapeutically. If the view is bland or not inspiring, add interest through art, water features, chimes, and other anchor points such as rocks, sculptures, or plantings.
- If you have more than one sitting area, let each one reflect a different mood or purpose. These can be meditation, contemplation, shady privacy, viewing sunsets or sunrises, outdoor dining, wildlife viewing, flower gazing, taking in sounds or scents, etc.
- Encourage the use of sitting areas: let them become saturated with the feeling of peace and gratitude.
- Encourage wildlife in the vicinity of sitting areas. Introduce safe animals: turtles, frogs, rabbits, fowl.
- Provide a secure backing formation behind the sitting area: This can be a solid wall, a hedge, bushes, or a tree. A strong backing formation provides psychological security. Avoid sitting areas open on all sides.
- Provide sitting opportunities near the entrance to the garden: this is a favorite spot for the weak and the infirm.
- Provide shelter where needed. Add a chapel, pavilion, or some other enclosure to provide a destination or purpose.

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## ADD COLOR AND THE PLAY OF LIGHT

*Color and light are the soul of a healing garden. More than any other quality, it is the ephemeral interplay of tones, hues, and changing intensities that draws out our own soulful understanding of life and its incredible variety and beauty. Because color is transitory in nature, color also helps us to understand our own mortality. The result is an acceptance of life and our healing journey.*

- Although there are many theories of color, it is best to work intuitively. A skilled gardener is one that follows the lead of the heart. Color is symbolic of memory, relationships and personal essence and serves also as a powerful symbol of the internal essence of each life form. These cannot be understood intellectually.
- It is best to keep color schemes simple and to build resonances gradually. Color should be integrated with forms, and should exalt rocks, water features, and vegetation. It should be added only as the need arises.
- It is important to sit and observe the play of light over time. It helps to know the flowering times of plants in your region and how they will behave in the particular setting you have chosen. Consider how much drama you wish to create: is it best to show color in full blast, or as a sequence or layering over time?
- Light is particularly tricky in closed areas and northern latitudes. It is important to know what your plants will need and how it will affect foliage colors, texture patterns and their interplay with stone and water.
- In general terms it is helpful to create areas of shadow and sunlight that can encourage different activities. Often a shaft of light that penetrates into a shady area will create some of the most desirable effects. Enhance this with the appropriate color combinations and background vegetation.
- Remember to integrate foliage and leaves into the color scheme. This is particularly important in gardens that will not support luxurious flowering. Artful combinations of greens can run the gamut from silvery to almost yellow and can include dry species that will turn red or orange for winter viewing.
- It is important to work with the maturity traits of your plants. Know their height, width, and light needs in the conditions they are exposed to. This will help to prevent smothering of shorter or weaker species.
- Although color appreciation is subjective, there are some basic qualities that are universally agreed upon. Red, for example is symbolic of passion, activity, courage and helps to reduce depression and lethargy. It should be used sparingly as it can make the garden feel smaller.
- Orange is similar to red and will stimulate the nervous system, enhance will power and vitality. It helps to reduce monotony and lack of motivation.
- Yellow is cheerful, warm and stimulating, It is symbolic of clear thinking, harmony in relationships, and family life, and will stimulate the nerves and the brain.
- Green is the color of peace, growth and renewal. It supports knowledge, wealth and family.
- Blue/indigo is the color of spirituality and helps to induce calmness, sincerity and rest. Used excessively it can induce passivity and depression. It stimulates knowledge, a sense of mission, and career.
- Violet/purple is the soulful aspect of the self. It signifies deep love, mystery, contemplation and the unconscious. It needs to be surrounded by brighter colors.
- White is the color of purity and of the matrix on which all other forms and colors are laid. It stimulates our spirit and helps to release distractions.

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## CREATE NATURAL ANCHOR POINTS AND INCLUDE ART

*In order to make the garden stimulating and interesting it is important to consider the use of special features and works of art that can act as anchor points to demarcate the basic layout of the space.*

*This helps to take in the garden as a whole and also makes for more interesting subspaces.*

- Anchor points can be created out of any garden component: rocks, water features, trees, fences, screens, trellises, artwork, sound, or scents. What is important in each case is the emphasis placed on the feature. This can be achieved through special plantings, use of color, manipulation of light, and through artful placements and view angles.
- Each anchor point needs to have a carefully defined purpose. Contemplative situations require a full sense of involvement with the surroundings and may benefit from proximity or views of a water feature, tree, or sculpture. Conversely, conversation areas require that the surroundings recede in importance in order to support social interaction. Entertainment areas, on the other hand, may require vantage points and focalized sitting arrangements.
- No matter what the situation, however, it is important to keep the design simple and not over-design. It is often better to introduce activities slowly in order to see and analyze how the space reacts to the activity before committing to a formal design gesture.
- Take into consideration the needs of the infirm and the cognitively impaired. It is important for them to know instinctively where they are and where the pathways may lead them. This helps to reduce stress and enhances the healing power of the garden. Providing anchor points helps them to focus and clarifies the structure of the space.
- An anchor point can serve as a point of interest to be seen from a distance, or as a place to enter and be surrounded by its qualities. It is important to understand this differences. Each of these situations will require differing design approaches, materials, and construction.
- Art is a powerful way to create healing environments, especially if the patients and staff are involved in their design and construction. In this sense art can become part of the therapeutic program.
- Art need not be permanent. In fact, changing artwork adds interest and variety to the environment.
- There are many opportunities for creative projects: creating ceramics; building mobiles, wind chimes, or birdhouses; fashioning simple furniture; painting flags or driftwood; and many others.
- Artwork can be incorporated directly into the garden and become part of the experience. It is not necessary to display art formally; often it is best to allow art to remain casual and interactive.
- There is a difference between secular and sacred art. Secular art has a more personal flavor and can include whimsy and humor. It can also be more temporary. Sacred art tends to be more permanent and can be dedicated to one of the powers of nature (earth, wind, air, fire), to a deity or a healing force.
- Artwork can also include signs and plaques. These can be inspirational or informative. Naming a garden is a powerful way to enhance its healing potential.
- It is possible to use art to create relief in areas that are barren or devoid of greenery, or during periods when the land is dormant. Ice sculptures and candles, for example, work well in winter.

**ENCOURAGE WILDLIFE VISITORS**

*Healing gardens work because they have the power to bring humans back into connection with Nature. It is the creative power of nature inherent in each one of us that achieves the healing. In this sense it is important to recognize that we are all part of the greater web of life and that we share this earth with all of life, not only our own.*

- Wildlife should be encouraged and honored. Enroll the participation of other species to soothe, delight and calm our senses. Think of your garden as a refuge in the vast web of life.
- In order to attract a variety of wildlife, create as natural a setting as possible. Provide diversity of food in berries, seeds, nuts and nectars. Keep seasonal variations in mind.
- Know the wildlife common in your area. It is possible to attract specific life forms by providing the right type of food, shelter, and water.
- Do not use poisons or chemicals in the garden. This includes fertilizers, pesticides and harsh chemicals such as chlorine in water features. Investigate natural cleaners for stone, metal or against algae in water features.
- Provide ample space for each species. Consider home range and territorial needs. Provide nesting boxes, bird houses, shallow water for song birds and humming birds, deeper water for frogs and turtles, and sand for birds in preening. Consider colors and flowers that will attract butterflies and birds.
- Plan for structural layering of plant forms in both the horizontal as well as the vertical dimension. This creates the most effective habitat for nesting, feeding and avoiding predators.
- Provide shelter and protection. Create nesting cover, thermal cover from heat and cold, and provide ground cover for smaller varieties. In fish tanks provide coves and rock shelves for hiding and hunting. Place birdbaths safe from other predators and in the path of optimal flight.
- Be conscious of the “edge effect”: transition zones between microclimates often harbor the greatest biodiversity.
- Provide water for differing needs: still for birds and butterflies, moving for fish, turtles, and mammals. Very shallow water is welcome by a wide variety of insects and song birds. Deeper water is less attractive.
- Provide sources of food: introduce varieties that will yield seeds, nuts, berries, or nectar. Encourage insects that will attract birds, bats, or dragon flies. Add aquatic plants in ponds to encourage fish, toads, and snails. Consider seasonal food needs.
- Consider introducing more domestic forms of life: turtles, rabbits, guinea pigs, fowl. Animals are particularly helpful to the elderly, to children, and to the cognitively impaired.

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## INCLUDE SHRINES

*The healing power of a garden is the manifestation of the spiritual characteristics of the land on which it sits, the vegetation and wildlife that enriches it, the cosmic and telluric forces the shape it and make its beauty manifest, and the intentions and effort of the community that conceived, created and maintained it. Honoring these and other spiritual forces greatly enhances the healing power of a site.*

- A shrine is a device that allows the power of a particular spiritual force or tradition to become manifest. It therefore needs to be in alignment with that particular intention. It is best if staff and patients are of one mind in the creation of such a shrine. Suitable forces include saints and deities, ancestors, spiritual teachers, and devoted healers, the forces of nature (earth, water, air, fire), as well as any other traditional healing powers characteristic of a given population or tradition.
- Continuous use and maintenance of a shrine is a necessary condition for the healing power of a shrine to become manifest. Neglect, shabbiness or clutter will all impact negatively on its effectiveness.
- A shrine can be constructed in any form, material, or size. It can be incorporated into the formal design of the garden or added later. Shrines can be as ephemeral as a few banners blowing in the breeze, or as permanent as a fully fledged chapel or temple.
- A shrine needs to take into consideration the purpose for which it is created: a contemplation shrine should be located in a quiet private place; a prayer shrine may require seating for larger groups. A bereavement shrine may need to be totally private or partially concealed behind plantings or off a more secluded path.
- A shrine is not a shrine until it is ritually consecrated. This means that the rituals proper to the tradition to which it belongs need to be fulfilled. Thereafter, the shrine should remain under the care and supervision of a qualified ritual practitioner.
- Simple personal shrines can also be constructed to honor more generic forces such as the waters, flowers, or a special tree. These need not be formally consecrated, although it is still important that they receive frequent visitors.
- A simple shrine to the forces of the earth can be constructed by piling stones or by erecting a stone pillar or table. Known as cairns, such devices are ubiquitous around the planet and are often used as a place to meditate, pray or thank for a particular healing, and as a way for staff to ground and center themselves for their tasks. Cairns can also be combined with water features or other anchor points.
- Water features such as fountains or waterfalls make suitable shrines to the healing power of the feminine. They can include areas for flowers, offerings, candles and messages.
- Similarly, trees, especially mature larger ones, can also serve as shrines to the regenerative power of nature. They can be honored with special plantings, sculptures, or festooned with flags, garlands or lights.
- Statues to saints or nature spirits such as fairies or angels also make suitable shrines.
- It is often helpful to name the garden after a saint, cosmic force or healing influence in order to better harness its healing power. Dedication ceremonies can also be devised to amplify this connection.

**ALEX STARK**

*feng shui  
geomancy  
shamanism*

## CONTROL GEOPATHIC STRESS

*Although the power of the earth is essential to healing and recuperation, this power can become compromised under certain conditions. Known as geopathic stress, this disruption of the earth's vital force can result in situations that are unsuitable for humans and exposure to which can cause myriad complications. It is therefore important to remediate or eliminate any such situation.*

- Geopathic stress can be caused by a number of sources. The most important of these are dark streams, natural geomagnetic deposits, ley lines, and global geomagnetic grid lines.
- Dark streams are underwater veins that have been made noxious by physically disruptive events such as road cuttings, foundations, steel pilings, heavy industry, military activity, or explosions.
- Natural geomagnetic deposits can also show geopathic activity, particularly if they involve iron ore.
- Ley lines are straight over-ground energy lines that reflect or echo larger underground currents, including underground rivers
- Global geomagnetic grid lines are thought to arise from the earth's magnetic fields in the form of vertical or horizontal radiation.
- Geopathic activity has been implicated in the following disorders: insomnia, nightmares, inexplicable irritability, allergies, sudden infant death syndrome, myalgic encephalomyelitis, migraine, asthma, eczema, arthritis, immune disorders, many types of cancers, and rheumatic disorders.
- Additional symptoms can include: unwarranted exhaustion, history of poor performance, depression or anxiety, and odd or unexplainable behavior.
- Certain life forms are attracted to this type of energy: cats, owls, snakes, slugs, snails, ants, wasps, bees, parasites, molds, bacteria, and viruses. Infertility and odd animal behavior is another sign of its presence.
- Compromised vegetation can also signal the presence of geopathic stress: withering or contorted trees and plants, repeated lightning strikes, dead or stunted gaps in hedges and tree lines, bare patches on lawns (particularly if they are linear), cankers, and infertile fruit trees.
- Other signs include: unresolved clutter, cracks in glass, brick, or plaster, recurring mechanical or electrical failure, accident-prone areas, and quick spoilage of foods and photographic film.
- There is some evidence connecting geopathic activity with bad-neighbor syndrome, ghosts and other paranormal activity.
- There is some evidence linking geopathic stress to lack of respect to the land as evidenced in the presence of geopathic activity in crime areas, war zones, execution grounds, desecrated burial grounds and in areas that have not been ceremonially cleared for ground breaking, new construction, development, etc.
- Cures for geopathic stress include the construction of protective walls or ditches, the burying of protective items, the placing of special devices such as crystals, coils or rods in the path of the stress, and the installation of radionic devices.
- If you suspect geopathic stress in your garden, it is imperative to consult a qualified geomancer.

**ALEX STARK**

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