



Stone mulch, hand-selected boulders and random plantings of Siberian irises, maidenhair fern and a specimen pine tree are among the landscape elements that evoke a Japanese feeling in the yard.

## Garden Get

PERSONALIZE YOUR OUTDOORS  
WITH A THEME GARDEN

BY REBECCA KONYA  
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF GINKGO LEAF STUDIO

Whether you're seeking a tranquil retreat or a fuss-free environment, the following garden styles are sure to result in an impressive outdoor living space.

### Zen Garden

Zen gardens are a growing trend among Milwaukee-area homeowners seeking an outdoor space that is idyllic and serene. The minimalist garden style favors stone mulch over natural plant material and fluid, asymmetrical planting beds. "People are starting to embrace the mid-century modern style again," says James Drzewiecki, who owns Ginkgo Leaf Studio in Cedarburg. "The simplicity of the Zen garden lends itself well to that architectural style."

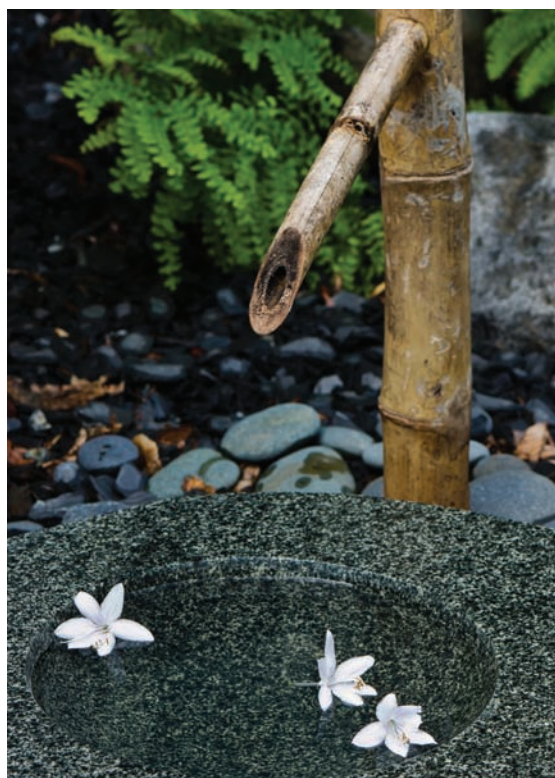
Kerry Mattingly, co-owner of Treetop Landscape Design in Grafton, says the Zen garden theme is becoming increasingly attractive to older homeowners who want to turn their outdoor living area into a tranquil space better suited to quiet conversation and contemplation. "Now that their children are grown, baby boomers' outdoor space needs have changed," says Mattingly. "They're looking for peace and quiet."

Drzewiecki says Japanese maples, juniper trees and flowering shrubs like rhododendrons and azaleas fit the Asian garden theme well. Bamboo and ornamental grasses also lend character.

But Mattingly says the Zen garden style goes beyond the tangible elements. "The Zen theme should be looked at not just as a space, but a feeling," he says. "You're creating a peaceful atmosphere."

### Memorial Garden

The loss of a loved one can be a traumatic experience. But time spent designing and maintaining a memorial garden can provide much needed healing.



Inspired by Japanese style gardens, a graphic artist commissioned James Drzewiecki of Ginkgo Leaf Studio in Cedarburg to redo the front yard of his 1960s ranch in Cedarburg. "We didn't want it to be authentic and true in every detail," Drzewiecki says, "but to have more of a contemporary flair." The signature element of the design is the front walk made up of three separate sections of blue-stone. "It was pulled from the Japanese zigzag path that if evil spirits are following you they will fall off if your path changes direction," Drzewiecki says. "The stone sections give the feel of that partitioned walk."

A wabi basin with a bamboo spout at the front porch doubles as a fountain. Drzewiecki says wabi basins were typically placed outside tea houses where patrons would wash their hands and feet before entering.

Whether you simply plant a tree or a shrub in someone's memory or create a more elaborate space that incorporates plants, a sitting area or a memorial stone, a memorial garden should be a quiet and relaxing spot where family and friends can spend time remembering and reminiscing.

Drzewiecki, who has designed memorial gardens for commercial clients like the Wisconsin Humane Society, suggests incorporating elements that symbolize your loved ones. "Choose plants that have special meaning," he says. It could be your mother's favorite flower or an oak tree representing strength to honor your father.

Other nonplant elements might include a boulder engraved with your loved one's name or a bench that invites people to sit down and reflect on the life of your departed loved one.

### Water Garden

Consider a water feature if you want to add more interest to your outdoor living area. The soothing sights and sounds of running water from a fountain or waterfall conjure a calming atmosphere where homeowners can relax and de-stress.

But be forewarned, traditional water features are an investment of time and money. "A pond requires a lot of upkeep," says Chris Oberndorfer, owner of Oberndorfer Landscape Development in Mequon.

Although Oberndorfer saw a drop in demand for water features when the economy took a dive in 2008, pondless water features have helped revive the garden element.

A pondless waterfall is simply a recirculating waterfall where the water disappears into a reservoir hidden in the base. They're a great alternative if your yard can't accommodate a full-fledged pond. "They're self-contained so they don't use as much water and they can be turned off with the flip of a switch," Drzewiecki says.

### Perennial Garden

If your approach to yard work is more hands-off, planting a perennial garden may be your best bet.

"Everyone desires low maintenance in this day and age," Drzewiecki says.

Although planning a perennial garden takes a bit more effort up front, once planted it requires little more than two to three hours a week to maintain.

Mattingly encourages his clients to consider plants indigenous to the Midwest region. "Native plants typically require less care than horticultural varieties," he says.

In addition to its no-fuss nature, a perennial garden can wow with plant varieties in a rainbow of colors from early spring through late fall. "The constant change is a great feature," Oberndorfer says.

A few foolproof perennials that can weather the Wisconsin climate are daylilies, peonies and hosta. The lesser known columbine and goldenrod are bright and hardy, too. **M**