

The wonder of water

Cool down this summer by adding a water element to the garden. In part 2 of our water feature series we tell you where to start: by planning and knowing your needs when choosing a water feature

Where do I begin in choosing a water feature style?

The style of your garden should be shaped by the way you see, feel and live. The garden and all its elements should mould around your way of life like a comfortable shoe, be as nourishing as the company of an old friend ... Forget fashion, and acknowledge that style is a matter of personality, of understanding who you are...

Water will be one of the most powerful contributors to the look and experience of the garden, both in terms of its visual impact and also the more unseen subtle effects, which such animation will add to your outdoor living space. Let us make sure it is the cherry on the cake and not the proverbial fly in the ointment!

Selecting a specific style...

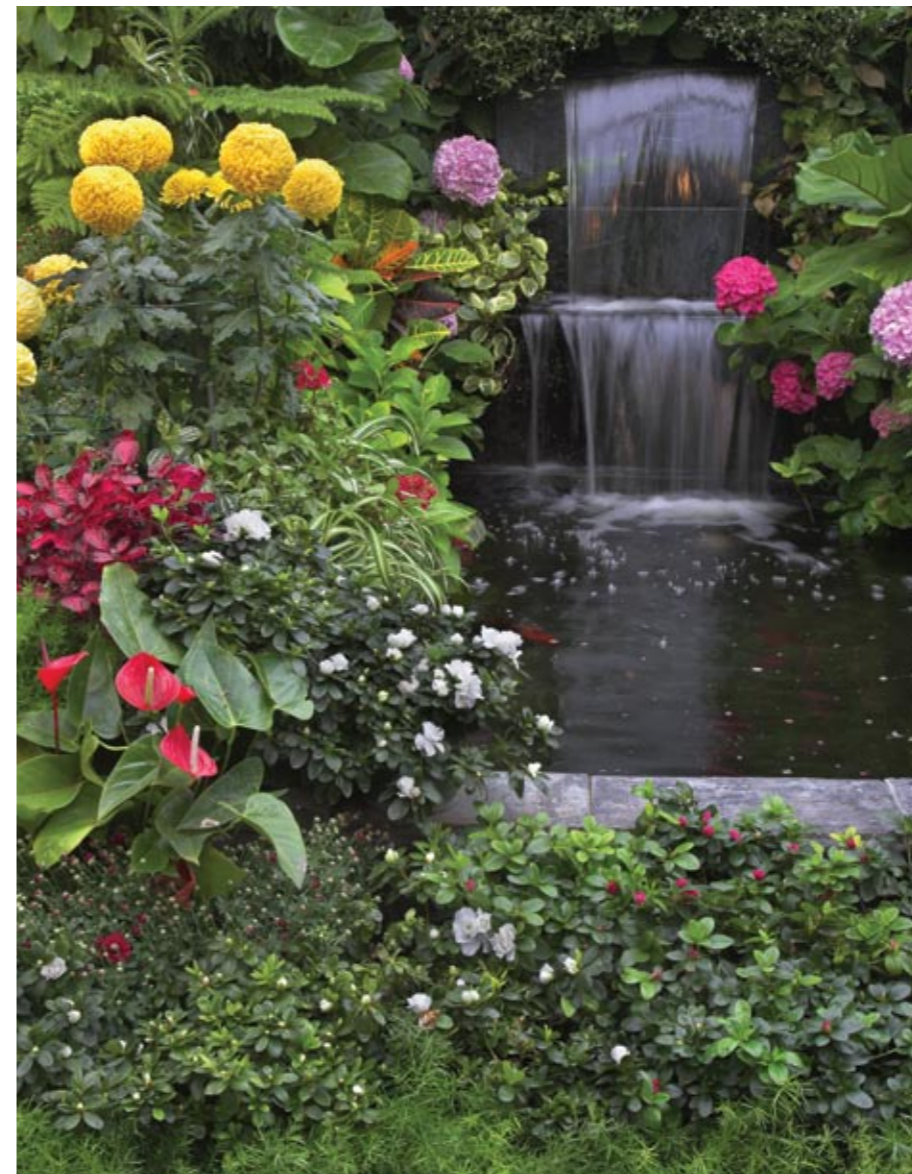
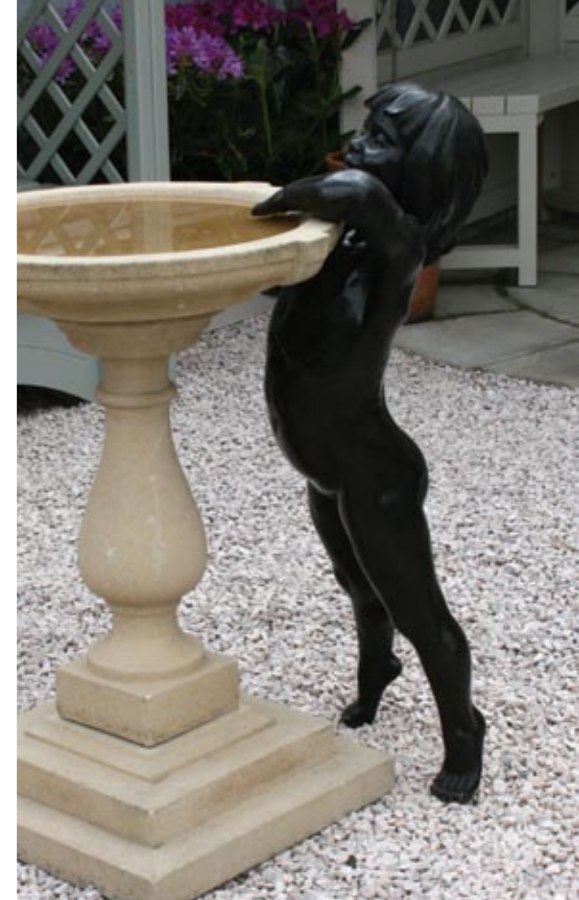
There are some pre-existing factors which

will powerfully lead you in a certain direction and which should be carefully considered before you decide to create a deliberate contrast or contradiction.

Site characteristics and natural setting

A house, which has been thoughtfully placed against a natural rocky outcrop, finished in earthy, textured finishes and colours, virtually screams for a natural rock waterscape which utilises the natural slope and setting optimally. Imagine a series of rock pools nestled in natural clearings all along the outcrop, with a connecting stream babbling restfully over a floor of river stones ... It will look as if the house was built next to a small mountain stream and not the other way around!

A formal, classic Italian water feature on the other hand, may just look too out of



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place in a bushveld setting, particularly if it is viewed from the house with the natural landscape as its backdrop. The subconscious mind may just be too stretched by this contrast and the experience of restful unity is compromised.

Architecture

When the setting of the house is relatively neutral, the architecture of the house will play a big role in the choice of water feature style. If the water feature were viewed with the house as a backdrop, it would be wise to have it in a similar or complimentary style. If it is viewed away from the house, much more license can be taken with contrast.

Form and Shape

Echoing a shape or architectural detail in the water feature design creates rhythm and unity and lays the groundwork for a peaceful experience. It is a sometimes unseen order, which makes the difference between "aahh" and "ouch"!

Finer details matter a great deal

Consider the inherent nature of specific materials and what their use in the garden will contribute to the mix.

These materials provide the permanent elements of form, texture and colour in the garden and are thus responsible for its skeleton - the structure and integrity of the design. Appropriate choices create backdrops that empathize, not fight, with our planting choice.

Concrete

A concrete structure can be manipulated towards the contemporary by smoothing it, and towards the informal end of the visual



Material choices

The texture of an item suggests so much potential sensuality. It brings a fresh sensory dimension to the garden. Although it is not truly necessary to touch to appreciate the texture, one is almost compelled to reach out and touch something which looks inviting to the eye.

scale by leaving it rough or textured. Decorative edges will further strengthen a particular look.

Stone

Natural stone is pleasing to the eye and possesses a quality of "just feeling right!" It is always at one with the landscape, conveying a sense of place, timelessness and honesty. Stone also matures beautifully with age and a whole array of different colour and textures are available to enhance any garden style.

Sandstone and Slate

Both materials are available in a variety of finishes, which will effortlessly accommodate anything from contemporary sleekness to the warm informality. The choice of colour, specific shapes, and overall finish will determine the final feel.

Metals

Metals may be smooth and shiny like stainless steel or aluminium; or dull and uneven as in the case of rusted metal. The same base material will convey a sensory experience worlds apart depending on the finish applied to it.

On the whole, shiny, hard surfaces are sleek and metropolitan whereas rough finishes suggest a more casual, rustic context.

Glass and Perspex

These materials are predominately used in modern contemporary gardens – city slickers, if you wish. Their light reflecting properties are exceedingly useful to create dramatic and unusual effects in the garden.

Ceramics

The versatile nature of ceramic tiles and mosaics make them suitable for a variety of styles. A splash of colour can bring focus to a feature, which may otherwise be mundane. The surface may be smooth- or rough-textured, allowing for a range of effects.

Wood

Wood is a warm, lively material and infinitely versatile. It is important to acknowledge that the same material finished differently will produce a completely varied experience. For example, a rough railway sleeper is robust and heavy, whilst the same item smoothly finished conveys much less visual weight and can be incorporated into a less rustic setting by virtue of the smooth, sleek look, particularly when polished.

Bits and Pieces

Some of the most delightful water features can be put together

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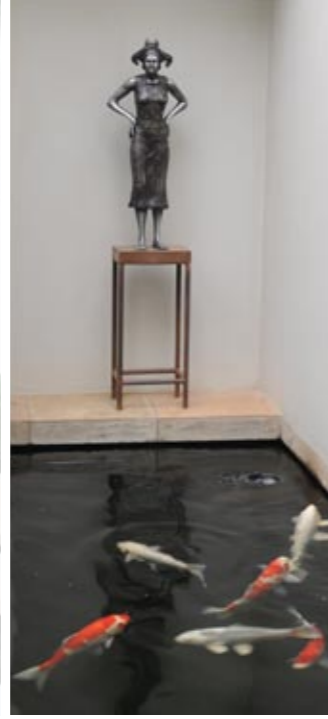
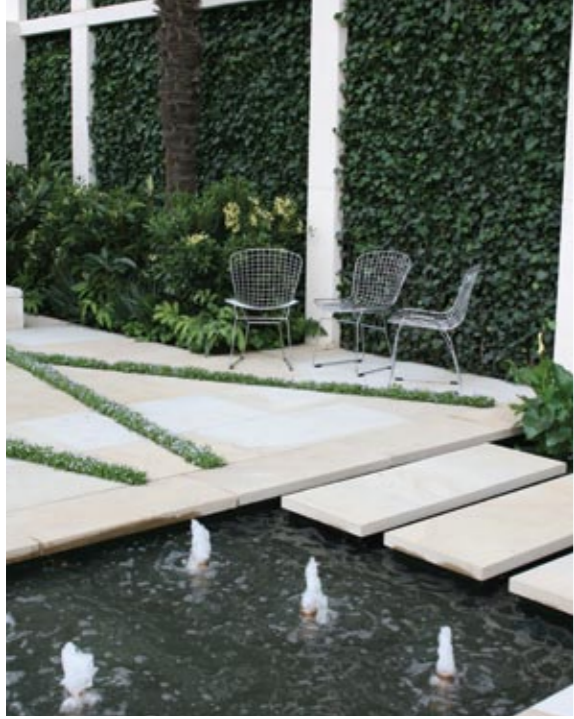
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from random everyday items. They are quirky, unusual and simply intended to be fun! Armed only with an eye for shape and texture and an unfettered mind, personal inventiveness can be released! After all, who is to say that old garden implements may not be a water feature?

Instant Options

Self-contained units of all descriptions are available nowadays and they can be very successfully integrated in the garden or the effect can verge on the banal.

The key to success lies in the word 'integrated'. Self-contained units often end up looking like 'stuck on' superfluous bits of decorating, plonked in the middle of nowhere!

The reason for this is simple – if it is not treated as a part of an overall landscaping design, the feature will look like an afterthought, as if it was superimposed on something which was already shaped. Creating an appropriate context for a self-contained feature is crucial! It will display the unit at its best and enhance the garden, not detract from it.



Mistakes are costly...

Mistakes with water are both costly and difficult to correct. Chances are that the homeowner will move before the water feature is ever changed! Using the services of an experienced and reputable professional may be the best investment that you will make in years! Designing for water calls for a thorough understanding of the medium and there is simply no substitute for experience. Water can be wonderful or full of woes! The difference between these two scenarios pivots on planning, forethought and professional expertise. You are, as always, master of your own destiny... 🌿