



The wonder of water

Cool down this summer by adding a water element to the garden

Water is synonymous with life. Not only are our own bodies almost completely composed of it, but all living things depend on water for their existence. It is perhaps then not surprising that our own state of mind and being is so readily influenced by the presence of water. For this reason precisely, water should be introduced thoughtfully into the garden.

Due consideration should be given to every aspect of its nature, as it will help define the final feel and look of the

garden. As water is generally animated, it automatically draws the attention forcefully – as such it must be completely in keeping with the overall ambience of the garden.

Water works in mysterious ways

The presence of water in a garden has some less obvious but nonetheless powerful effects on the overall experience of a living space: sound, light, cooling and an enhanced spatial feel.

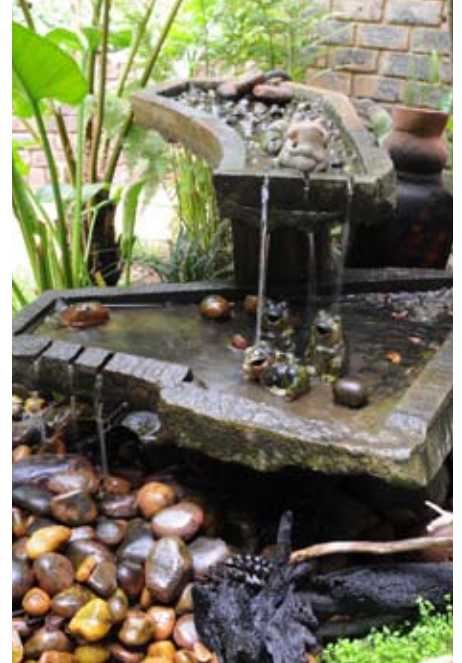
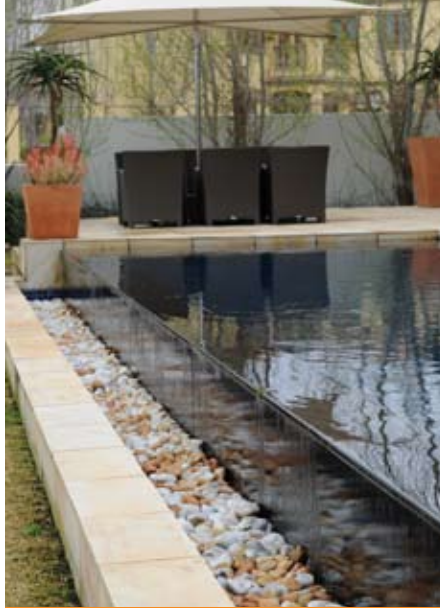
Sound

The effect of the sound of water should be

carefully considered. It should thoughtfully contribute to the overall desired atmosphere and be in keeping with the specific needs of the individual garden and its users.

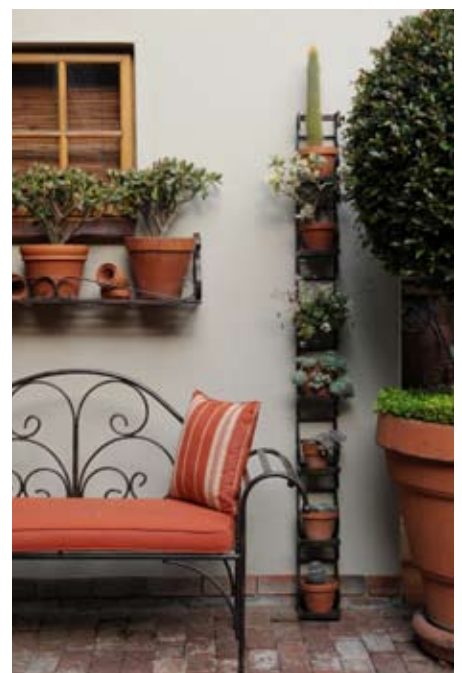
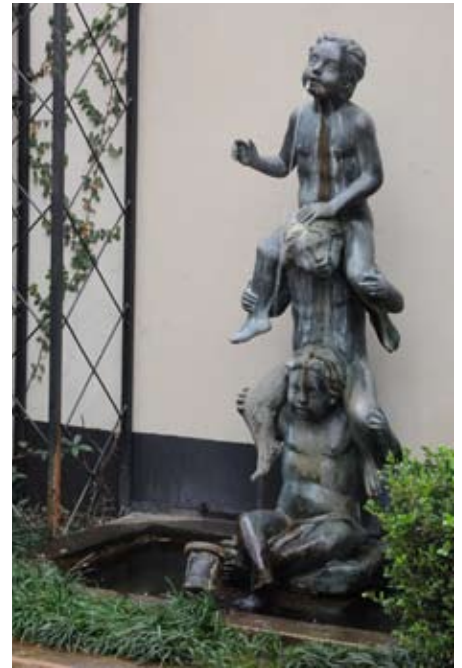
When trickling or bubbling, water is soothing, while the energy of a cascade of water is stimulating and potentially agitating. Only you will be able to judge the balance between too little and too much. Water is experienced uniquely by each person and beauty will be in the eye of the beholder!

Remember that sound is amplified in a closed or semi-closed space. This is an important design consideration in



Top Tip

Water can be your biggest joy or ultimate disappointment – the difference pivots on planning and forethought!





Renée's quote of the month

"It is good to be alone in a garden at dawn or dark so that all its shy presences may haunt you and possess you in a reverie of suspended thought!"

— James Douglas, Down Shoe Lane



courtyards, narrow alleys and indoor gardens. Designs in these areas should be suited to a low volume of circulating water. The larger the volume of circulating water and the further it falls into the catchment area, the greater the volume of the sound it generates. Where possible, it is handy to install a valve which controls the volume of water being pumped. Many pumps are manufactured with this facility already built in.

Light

Water reflects light, which introduces uniquely creative possibilities. A still pool may reflect a structural plant or tree, or even their shadows. Add wind movement into the equation and you have a display of flickering images and fragments of light on the canvas of the water's surface.

You may be able to brighten a dull, shady area by adding a still, reflective pool which will reflect and maximize the available light.

In ponds where underwater lighting is installed, water movement on the surface of the pond will produce dancing shadows at night. This is particularly effective in a water feature placed against a wall. The effect is both surprising and unexpectedly charming.

Cooling

The mere presence of water is cooling. Being able to soak one's feet in a pool of water on a hot day is just an added bonus! Water will also naturally contribute to evaporative cooling and as such, physically cool an area. The more enclosed it is, the more distinct the effect will be.

An enhanced spatial feel

Water can create a cool, visual and restful break in a garden where the planting is quite dramatic and full.

Water also has an infinite feel, particularly when the base and sides of the pond are black and it becomes almost impossible to discern its true depth. As such, it can add a feeling of space to even a small water feature.

More direct design possibilities with water

When you consider what to use to facilitate that dreamy picture in your mind's eye, it is important to see your garden as a special kind of theatre. Certain players come and go, like flowering and deciduous plants, but furniture and props are there to stay, like hard landscaping elements such as water features.

A successful garden involves a harmonious interaction of all these elements. A water

feature will likely be of the main attractions, and needs to have its supportive cast in harmony. Together with other hard landscaping elements, it provides the framework of the garden by establishing the formal lines of a composition to support the planting.

Choice of construction materials:

Concrete, brick and mortar remain the mainstay of a permanent means of construction – and with good reason. The built structure may be dressed in virtually any finishing material to suit all garden styles, desired moods and particular site requirements.

Choices include different plaster effects with or without decorative edges, paint effects, cladding, authentic stone and sandstone, tiles of every description, plaster carving, mosaics ... virtually anything you can imagine! The visual impact and effect on the mood of the garden of these materials are explored in the second part of this series on water features.

Choice of ornamentation and decorative items

You can bring the tranquil sound of water into your garden with waterfalls, spouts,

masks, pots, spillways, glass walls and structures, stainless steel creations and much, much more.

If you have a water feature, you can also keep water plants and bog plants as an extension to the water body. Wildlife and birds are invariably drawn to water, adding life and vitality. If designed appropriately from the start, fish and waterfowl could be introduced with ease and provide much enjoyment. You also do not have to worry about your dogs tipping over their water bowls, as there will be a permanent source of water on hand!

Water has a mind of its own

Many creative possibilities exist for the use of water in the garden, whatever the scale of the water project. The principle of its circulation remains the same: a holding facility is situated at the lowest level, is filled with water and houses the pump, which is internally or externally mounted. The pump circulates the water by pushing it up to the highest point required, from where it will descend down to the bottom again. The circulation to the holding facility may be

through a waterfall, a spill way, spouts, an ornamental mask or a multitude of other decorative means.

A word of caution

- Consider the trajectory of water carefully to avoid undue splashing and resulting water loss. It may be particularly dangerous when situated near a patio or walkway. If the water level drops too low, it may cause the pump to burn out.
- Have an informed appreciation of the volume of sound which will be generated by the design you choose.
- Consider how the system will be kept clean before construction or installation begins. Considering this too late will result in an ineffective or inconvenient and unnecessary compromise.
- Make sure that your pump and filtration equipment are matched to the volume of water being handled, particularly where fish are involved. Sufficient aeration is vital, and filtration equipment requires a particular rate of circulation to be effective.
- When it comes to water, the expertise of an experienced professional will prove a very sound investment.

