Home Gardeners School:
What Plant, Where? Planning Your Home Garden
Peter Mahony, NJ Licensed Landscape Architect & contractor
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- A highly opinionated “short list” of the best books about plants and design.

Plant books
Manual of Woody Landscape Plants – Michael A. Dirr
Simply the best book on woody plants there is. A well-worn copy rests on every “plant-weenie’s” bookshelf.

The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes – Rick Darke
Spectacular photo’s, great information. Best reference to date on a wonderful class of plants. Can’t miss. Darke’s slightly older book, Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses, is also outstanding.

Taylor’s Guides
Collection of books covering a wide range of plant types. Great for identifying and basic information.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Gardening Handbooks
Free handbook yearly with membership. Great deal!

Books about arranging, combining and using plants (by author)
James Van Sweden  Gardening with Water, Gardening with Nature, Architecture in the Garden
Bold Romantic Gardens (with Wolfgang Oehme).
Inspirational. Lots of ideas. Mostly larger-scale projects beautifully illustrated. (The ideas still apply to smaller-scale projects)

Thomas D. Church  Gardens are for People
Revised edition (1995) of a classic tome written in the 50’s by one of the most influential masters of modern landscape design.

William H. Fredrick jr. 100 Great Garden Plants, The Exuberant Garden and the Controlling Hand
“100 Great Plants” covered, but hundreds more are discussed in combinations. Plant suggestions are eminently useful as the author hails from Delaware.

Pamela J. Harper  Designing with Perennials, Time Tested Plants
Keen observations, great photographs, great information. Many, many combinations.

Allen Lacy  The Garden in Autumn
Will rock your world about what is out there beyond “ho-hum” spring flowers. Eloquently written. An easy read. Another gem that is worth searching for.

Unfortunately, like many great horticulture books, some of the above are out of print and may be difficult to find. Many of them have been recommended to seminar attendees in previous years classes which has further reduced the availability of these gems (Sorry!). Hunt for them at Brick and Mortar stores and on the Internet: Amazon, Abebooks, Barnes & Noble and Timber Press are good starting places. Happy Hunting!
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Design Characteristics of Plants
Size – shade tree, ornamental scale/flowering tree, significant conifer, shrubs, vines, groundcovers.
   See “Sizes to Draw Plants” for guidelines for “design size”.
Shape (form) - creeping/spreading/round/upright/columnar. Seasonal differences: winter vs. summer
Cultural/environmental conditions – sun/shade/wet/dry/clay/sand/deer (!!!)
Foliage color – spring/summer/fall. Exotica: variegated, multi-colored.
Texture – boxwood vs. rhododendron. Size and shape of leaves and spaces between the leaves.
Flowers – Color/fragrance/intensity/duration/textural effects
Bark interest – Color/patterns/textures. Cherries/birch/stewartia
Maintenance aspects of plants – growth rate/ seasonal cleanup (which season?) Pest problems

Design considerations: How to go about using plants
Treat plants as functional elements
   Think of them as tools to do a job. Groundcover are the carpet. Shrubs, flowering trees and large
evergreens can make up the walls. Shade trees are the roof or ceiling of the site.
   Perennials and grasses are often treated as the accessories: Cushions on a sofa
Windbreaks / shading: Moderate summer sun S & SW sides of house. Moderate NW winter winds.
Define entries and arrival spaces. Doors, walkways, garage.
Privacy, buffers; A little bit goes a long way towards making for better neighbors.
Circulation – How people and vehicles move through the landscape. Use to direct where to and NOT
   TO go! Accent plant to indicate a change; Hedges to block access. Thorny plants as barriers.
Outdoor living areas – Shade Patio, terrace, deck, play areas, NOT shading pool, vegetable garden.
Views – Create where none, screen/subordinate objectionable views, enhance/maximize good views.
   Use larger plants as a backdrop for smaller plants or to highlight a garden feature. Create foreground.
Specimens: (focal point) Plants used sparingly for greater impact. Simple surroundings will magnify impact.

Mass  Triangulate  Inter-twine & Overlap  Create Depth  Repeat
SIZES TO DRAW PLANTS

Chose either an architect's or engineer's scale that matches the scale you will be using to draw your landscape plan. Using this scale, measure the diameter of circles on a circle template or compass and select the appropriate size to match the type of plant you wish to draw following the guidelines on the chart below.

Shade or canopy tree

Conifer or ornamental trees

Large shrubs

Average shrubs

Draw no shrubs less than 3'' dia.

Exceptions could be dwarf boxwood, espaliers, columnar trees & shrubs or perennials.
Seasonal Orientation of the Sun

PLAN VIEW!

ELEVATION VIEW: