

# Designing a Beautiful Garden

## *Elements of Texture, Color and Value*

Crafting a beautiful garden involves balancing design elements to create spaces that are both aesthetically pleasing and functionally cohesive. Among these, texture, color, and value play significant roles in shaping the garden's ambiance and structure. According to the Oklahoma State University Extension fact sheet, [Homeowner Garden Design Series: Elements and Principles of Design HLA-6441](#), these three elements work in harmony to establish mood, depth, and visual interest. Understanding how to apply texture, color, and value can help homeowners transform their outdoor spaces into stunning and immersive environments.

As this series continues next month, we will discuss the principles of design...the strategies used to combine the elements into one cohesive garden.

### Texture



Texture in garden design refers to the surface quality of plants and hardscapes, which can be perceived through sight and touch. The texture of leaves, stems, and flowers, along with hardscaping materials, adds layers of visual detail that contribute to the garden's atmosphere. Plant textures range from fine and delicate to bold and coarse, with each offering distinct visual effects. It is arguable that texture is most important, because bloom time and seasonal changes affect color, whereas texture can be more lasting.

Fine-textured plants, like ornamental grasses or ferns, convey softness and airiness, often filling spaces subtly without overwhelming other elements. They are ideal for creating a sense of openness and lightness, especially in smaller areas where larger textures might feel heavy or cramped. Coarse-textured plants, on the other hand, such as hostas or elephant ears, add dramatic contrast with their larger leaves and thicker stems. These plants draw attention, often serving as focal points and adding dimension to the garden. By strategically combining fine and coarse textures, designers can introduce balance and rhythm, allowing each element to stand out without competing for attention.

Hardscape textures, like rough stone or smooth wood, complement plant textures, enhancing the garden's overall theme and reinforcing its structure. For instance, a stone pathway paired with delicate groundcovers creates a dynamic contrast that adds depth and interest to the space.

## Color

Color is an immediate and powerful design element that influences mood and perception. Color can draw the eye, set the tone, and even affect how a garden space feels in terms of size. Warm colors, such as reds, oranges, and yellows, create a sense of energy and warmth. These hues bring a lively quality to a garden, often making spaces feel closer and more intimate. Cool colors like blues, greens, and purples, however, have a calming effect, helping to create a relaxing, spacious atmosphere.



Careful use of color schemes can enhance harmony within a garden. Monochromatic color schemes—using variations of a single color—provide subtlety and cohesion, while complementary color schemes—using colors opposite each other on the color wheel—add striking contrast and energy. With color, gardeners can highlight specific areas, create focal points, or blend elements together seamlessly, impacting the overall flow of the design.

## Value



Value, in garden design, refers to the lightness or darkness of colors within the landscape. Value is essential in creating contrast and depth, helping to guide the eye through the garden. Light-valued plants and features reflect more light and tend to stand out, especially against darker backgrounds, creating a sense of openness and highlighting specific areas. Dark-valued plants or hardscapes, on the other hand, absorb more light and recede visually, making them useful for framing lighter features or creating depth.

Incorporating value variations is also effective in defining garden layers. For instance, lighter plants in the foreground and darker plants in the background can add dimension, making the space appear larger and more dynamic. Playing with value helps create balance, ensuring that elements either stand out as focal points or blend seamlessly to enhance the garden's overall depth.

## Conclusion

The design elements of texture, color, and value each contribute uniquely to garden composition, enabling homeowners to create outdoor spaces that are engaging and harmonious. Texture adds tactile and visual interest, color defines mood and focus, and value introduces depth and contrast. By

thoughtfully combining these elements, gardeners can design landscapes that are not only visually appealing but also evoke specific emotions and experiences, transforming their gardens into beautiful, immersive environments.

**Resources:**

[Oklahoma Gardening Design Series: Texture and Color](#)

[Homeowner Garden Design Series: Elements and Principles of Design](#)

[HLA-6410: Perennial Flowers for Specific Uses in Oklahoma](#)

[HLA-6425: Annual Flowers for Specific Uses in Oklahoma](#)

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