

Real Simple Secrets for Selecting Outdoor Statuary

You're not alone if you find that the piece of garden statuary that looked so elegant at the garden center just doesn't seem to fit your garden back home.

A common mistake gardeners make when buying a piece of garden statuary is one of size and quantity, according to Peter C. Cilio, creative director of fine garden accessories for Campania International. "Purchasers tend to choose pieces that are just too small for their space or they overload their garden with too many pieces," he says. "In garden statuary the guiding principle usually is that less is more."

Here are some simple guidelines that will help you choose the perfect piece of statuary for your garden.



Keep It in Context

According to Cilio, the most important consideration to keep in mind when choosing the right piece of statuary is the overall style of your home and garden.

"Whether you have an urban, contemporary or country garden, the statuary you select should be compatible with the style and feeling of your house and garden," he says. "Most likely, you wouldn't place a classical statue in a contemporary-style garden. However, classical statuary makes wonderful features for a more traditional home or garden."

This is not to say that you can't mix it up a little bit. There is always the opportunity for personal expression. Eclectic mixes of styles can create original and exciting garden compositions, but Cilio believes that this is most effectively accomplished by the gardener with a sure sense of his or her own personal style.

Tres Fromme, planning and design specialist of Mesa Design Group in Dallas, suggests cutting a piece of statuary out of cardboard and placing it in different locations throughout your garden. "This will help you get a feel for where the piece looks it best," says Fromme. "It will also give you some time to think about why you want to add an ornament to your garden setting."

Cilio suggests thinking about your garden as a blank wall in your living room. Before choosing what to hang on your living room wall, you take cues from the style of the room. Think of your garden in that context, from the size of the space to the arrangement of trees, shrubs and flowers. These will be the cues used to choose and place your garden statuary.

Keep it Simple

Fromme finds that gardeners trying to introduce too many pieces into their garden create too many distractions for the eye to absorb or enjoy. The garden becomes complicated and cluttered.



“Under the less is more principle,” advises Fromme, “one well-suited piece will create a presence and a focal point, introducing harmony rather than chaos into the garden.”

The less is more principle does not mean you are limited to symmetrical arrangements of statuary in your garden. Multiple pieces and styles can work comfortably together if they are not part of the same compositional frame.

According to renowned garden designer, Jon Carloftis, each part of your garden may have a different mood or feeling and can provide an opportunity to incorporate different types of garden sculpture. Such pieces create interest year round and serve to animate and personalize a space; a strong design element can even inspire the theme for the plantings.

“For example, the right type of statuary can look equally well in bold foliage such as elephant ears or hosta,” says Carloftis. “A shady naturalistic area may be the perfect spot for a small animal figure or bench.”

“I like to incorporate small cast stone pigs into my vegetable garden to give that particular area a sense of whimsy,” adds Carloftis.

Statuary need not be placed front and center and often should not be. Nestled in among the plantings, they do not distract from the overall composition. However, discovering such pieces as one strolls in the garden brings a wonderful element of surprise and magic to the garden.

Create a Frame

Just like a picture on your wall, garden statuary looks best with some kind of frame. A background of traditional clipped box, yew or a mixed border of grasses frames your statuary in the landscape. A stone wall or trellis covered with roses or even a simple wooden fence is all you need.

Personally, Cilio prefers the simplicity and versatility of garden containers such as jars and vases, but believes following the simple guidelines of style, color and proportion will lead you to a choice of statuary that will enliven your garden without overpowering it.

To view Campania’s wide selection of cast stone garden statuary, visit www.campaniainternational.com