

## Beauty in Bloom

Garden guru Sara Antin of Outside Interiors tells us what inspires her designs

Aesthetic appeal and personal expression are extremely important to Sara Antin, who worked as an art instructor before shifting gears and launching her own landscape design business, Outside Interiors, more than 15 years ago. We asked her to tell us about her design process and to share some advice on how to create an outdoor space that is both beautiful and manageable.

**Q. How did you get started with landscape design?**

**A.** I was an art teacher at a private school and also worked at the Nelson Art Gallery. During this time I was teaching private art lessons in my home. Some students commented on my personal gardens and asked if I would be willing to design gardens for them. After designing three gardens for art clients, I was certain I had found my passion.

**Q. How does your artistic background inform your garden work?**

**A.** Visual scale is so important, as is harmonizing my clients' interior spaces with their outdoor living space.

**Q. Is garden design influenced by trends, as fashion and home design are?**

**A.** When it comes to colors in the garden, I tell my clients to use colors they are instinctively drawn to rather than the "color of the year" according to Pantone or the fashion industry. Outdoor furniture and accessories however are influenced by what's in style at the moment.

**Q. How would you describe your style?**

**A.** Good question! My personal style doesn't come into play when creating a garden for a client. I always let my prospective client know that my goal is to

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Photo by Garrett Antin



Creating beautiful outdoor spaces came naturally to Sara Antin, who found her passion for landscape design while working as an art teacher.



Antin suggests keeping landscape elements trimmed and in scale with the rest of your home to add impact to your outdoor areas.

integrate their interior space to their outdoor space. If my client's interior is austere with bold accents, for example, then my goal is to create a continuance of their personal style. If they enjoy accessories and architectural accents, typically they will want their gardens to reflect the same.

**Q. Tell us about the name of your company—why do you think it's important to tie interior and garden design together?**

**A.** For me, my clients' gardens should reflect their interior design and taste in order for it to be a place of comfort and enjoyment. I always ask if I may come inside in order to see their views, their personal style, and the color palette they feel comfortable with.

**Q. What's big in garden design now?**

**A.** Outdoor living spaces that include a full kitchen, bars with seating and outdoor fireplaces have become very popular. My clients who have incorporated outdoor fireplaces all use them regularly. I put one in my own personal garden and use it often. Also, comfy seating that resembles interior seating, such as comfortable sofas and sectionals, large French-style chairs, etc. It is not about an iron table, four chairs and two iron chaises any longer. It's about genuine comfort and enjoying our outdoor living spaces.

**Q. Where do you find inspiration for your work?**

**A.** Everywhere. Garden magazines, paintings, the colors in a fabric, driving and unexpectedly finding something that catches my eye, other gardens... My greatest

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inspiration however is found in architecture. The scale must be right. If a room has catawampus walls, whatever you put inside those walls is not going to feel “right” or comfortable.

**Q. Describe your design process.**

A. Meeting with a client personally is of utmost importance. I ask them to please share their interior living space. I want to know what colors they find comfort in, which room in the home is their favorite, and what about that space appeals.

And after learning the above, finding out how much maintenance is reasonable for them. In the second meeting we discuss what my vision is for their garden. If they agree and are excited, then it’s about deciding where to start, or if they want to break it into creating one area at a time or per season, whatever their comfort level allows.

**Q. What are some simple ways to have a big impact in your garden?**

A. Keep the landscape trimmed with the scale of the house. Don’t allow bushes to cover up the windows or ground covers to crawl over walkways, for example. Use quality mulch. (Something organic in color is always my personal preference.) Pots flanking walkways and gates in the garden add architecture and drama, but do keep the pots and sculptures in scale with their surroundings. I’d much rather see no pots or accessories at all than items that are puny relative to the plantings around them. ●

Reflecting homeowners’ personal style in their outdoor spaces is essential to Antin, who asks to see their interiors before starting a project to get a sense of their style.