

## Ornamental Landscaping

**F**rogs and lions don't seem to have a lot in common. One roars; the other rib-bits. One hops haphazardly in water, making us chuckle; the other purposefully struts on land, instilling fear in all. But in the garden, they are both peaceful and strategically placed as ornamental art. The animals are not alone, though.

Bronze figures, classical urns and other man-made items are being placed among flowers, vines and shrubs to bring a human element to the landscape. The result is a reunion between man, animal and plant life that adds personality to individual gardens.

Whether clients are requesting the use of ornaments or landscapers are suggesting them, the demand for this combination is rising. Animal figures are the most popular ornaments. In the past year, concrete frogs and rabbits were especially popular. Small ornaments such as these are the perfect finishing touches for a client's garden. Customers seem to prefer more whimsical things that don't take over the garden.

Consumers are looking for simple items that remind them of nature. There is an interest in spirituality.

Clients may be drawn to animal figures because they complete garden spaces. Frogs, bees, hedgehogs and rabbits are animals that were traditionally indigenous to gardens, and they look like they fit.

Suggesting ornaments as focal points, or additions to gardens, alleviates a lot of frustration for clients because these items are portable and controllable elements among the more permanent and unpredictable plant life. Ornamental art enables clients to take a more active role in the design process.

While it is exciting to see more ornamental art in the landscape, its placement in the garden is critical. Any ornament needs to be used carefully so it doesn't look like a second thought and get lost in the landscape. However, an ornament should not be placed in the landscape according to formula. It should reflect the owner's unique personality. There are two camps of design. There is a subtle visual cue, where the ornament is pocketed into the landscape. These visual cues include animal ornaments in laid back settings. Or there is a more immediate, human cue, where the eye is drawn directly to the sculpture. This includes carefully selected statues or a large piece of abstract art.

The opportunity to use ornamental landscape is definitely rising. It was seen as merely decorative yard art for a long time. Now it is emerging as part of the design.

Just as people have distinct personalities, so do the items they place in their gardens. The trick is to find a strategic alliance between man, art and the environment. Landscape art is a tool that can be used to reunite these elements.