



## Focal points enhance the beauty of a landscape

Many landscapes are lovely in your neighborhood, but there is one that stands above the rest. Everything seems 'just right' as you move through the space. A beckoning bench appears just where you'd like to pause for a moment. An elegant statue beckons you into an enchanting vignette. An arbor invites you to check out a mysterious corner.

Scenes like these aren't lovely accidents, but rather the skilled use of focal points. A few simple guidelines can help you become a focal point expert, too.



### Use garden accessories artfully.

The choice of garden ornaments available today is limitless, from classic statuary, reclaimed architectural finds and rustic twig furniture to gazing balls and brightly colored, whimsical whirligigs. For the best effect, choose a single style and use it throughout your landscape. If your landscape is large, different styles can be used effectively if different styles are kept in different, distinct areas.

Place ornaments so they appear to be the centerpiece of a portion of the design rather than an afterthought.

### Use dramatic color changes.

Within a garden, any significant change in color will draw the eye. Imagine a shady corner filled with layers of lush, cool greens – peaceful, perhaps, but maybe also a bit dull. Add a focal point by planting a brilliant yellow-leafed hosta and the satisfactory design becomes stunning.



### Remember the simple rules of geometry.

The human eye is able to pinpoint the center of a circle and expects to find something of particular interest in that space. Curvy bedlines drawn by skilled landscape designers are just a series of arcs (or circle segments) and our eyes naturally complete the geometric form.

In the landscape, the deepest part of an inward curve is the perfect spot for a focal point. The bedlines curve on either side to frame the view.

### **Use specimen plants.**

Some plants just demand attention because of their dramatic form or brilliant foliage color. Maximize the impact of these plants by surrounding them with subtle companions happily willing to play a supporting role. Picture the architectural form of a Japanese maple playing the starring role in a bed of hostas with dark green leaves.

### **Combine drift and detail.**

Any change in the garden interrupts the visual flow. Like it or not, when the eye stops, a focal point occurs. Make this a pleasant break rather than moment of confusion by placing a garden ornament at this juncture. Then, carry a plant variety from one planting scheme to the next to ensure continuity and to make the change appear deliberate.

Armed with these simple guidelines, take a walk through your landscape with the eye of a focal point expert. Then head out and buy that bench or statue you've been craving all summer – now you know the perfect place to put it!



*Diana Stoll is a horticulturist and the garden center manager of The Planter's Palette, 28W571 Roosevelt Rd., Winfield, IL 60190. Call 630-293-1040 or visit their website at [www.planterpalette.com](http://www.planterpalette.com).*