

# the layered look



*I have a large garden that encompasses both a front and back yard.  
We entertain a lot and would like to create a setting that draws people in.  
Can you offer some suggestions?*



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Depending on the lay of the land and the amount of vegetation already growing, a large garden can be turned into a magical and inviting space. The key is to create a layered effect, which can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Plant a smattering of wildflowers or small-leaf shrubs in natural groupings along the street and property lines. Depending on the style of your garden, such plants might include *Salvia greggii*, chuparosa, Mexican poppies, *Gaura lindheimeri* or golden fleece. Moving toward the house, sculptural plants, including agave, specimen cacti and small trees, can be interspersed with vegetation possessing medium-size leaves. These might include Mexican honeysuckle, gopher plant, penstemon, globe mallow, natal plum, 'Katie' *ruellia* and pittosporum. Closer to the living spaces, choose such lush, larger-leaf plant material as tropical bird of paradise, pencil euphorbia, octopus agave, umbrella plant or *Yucca pendula*. In each "layer," vary plant height and texture.

- Movement and dimension are key to drawing people in. If you have a long, straight concrete walkway, consider replacing it with a meandering path of flagstone, brown brick or cut stone. Walkways that gently narrow as they move toward the front entry draw the eye. Plant material that lines the walkway, such as clipped hedges, symmetrically placed trees,

or a row of pots or colorful annuals, adds interest.

- Locating a seat wall built of brick, adobe, concrete block or stacked stone about one-third of the distance from the street acts as a focal point that will draw guests in from the street or driveway.

- Situating a walkway between staggered berms, or rolling mounds, of lush plantings adds a mysterious quality to your garden. By including berms that partially block views, the path gradually reveals itself as guests approach the front door. Remember, berms should rise gently out of the ground.

- Boulders are a good way to add drama to any garden setting. Nestling specimen plantings, yucca, agave, ornamental grasses and bougainvillea near boulders creates points of visual intrigue.

- To achieve intimate outdoor spaces in your rear garden, try creating separate "rooms" or vignettes with patios, seating areas, secluded plantings and fountains. As in the front, berms, boulders and seat-walls can be used to achieve the effects you desire.

Soon enough, enticing visitors into your garden will be the easy part; getting them to leave will be another story. ✎

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