

? go with the flow

I've heard and read a lot about feng shui for interior spaces. Can you tell me how I can incorporate its principles into my outdoor areas?



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Feng shui is an ancient Chinese concept based on improving the flow of *chi*, a natural energy force. The principles of feng shui can be complex, but the overriding belief is that if our environments are balanced, harmonious and peaceful, our lives will be as well.

Elements that help the flow of *chi* also happen to be the backbone of good garden design. Tending to all five senses and enhancing the cohesiveness of interior and exterior spaces are the goals. Meandering pathways, water features and healthy plants, for example, are among the essentials of feng shui in outdoor spaces. Wind chimes, mobiles, flags and other items that move in the breeze are simple cures for softening sharp edges. Soothing water features buffer the sound of traffic and lend a serene feeling in the garden. Lighting and color also can be used to stimulate the flow of energy and help establish balance. And since wildlife contributes to a garden's positive *chi*, you may wish to create a safe, inviting environment for birds, butterflies and more.

Following are additional ways to improve the flow of *chi* in your landscape and, theoretically, your life. If nothing else, using these tips may increase the pleasure of time spent outdoors:

- Utilize the same flooring material for outdoor areas and adjacent indoor spaces to create visual flow and a sense of connectedness.
- Buffer your home from severe weather, sun and wind by incorporating trees, berms, walls or fences.
- Use vegetation or an attractive fence, wall or trellis to create separation between your home and the street and to block unsightly views of such elements as telephone poles, transformers and pool equipment.
- Ensure that vegetation remains healthy by practicing regular maintenance and removing all dead plants and trees from the landscape.
- Find a balance between too much vegetation, which can be overwhelming, and not enough, which is uninviting.

Feng shui is about what makes you feel good. It connects your home and garden to its site and celebrates Mother Nature. Think of pleasing all of your senses, and you are on your way to creating positive *chi*. ☀

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