

The American GARDENER®

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Techniques for
Planting Under Trees

John Greenlee:
Ornamental Grass
Evangelist

Tropical Hibiscus
for All Gardens



design tips for
Evening Gardens



designing outdoor spaces for Evening Enjoyment

Here's how to make your garden an inviting destination—even after the sun's gone down.

BY PAUL LEE CANNON

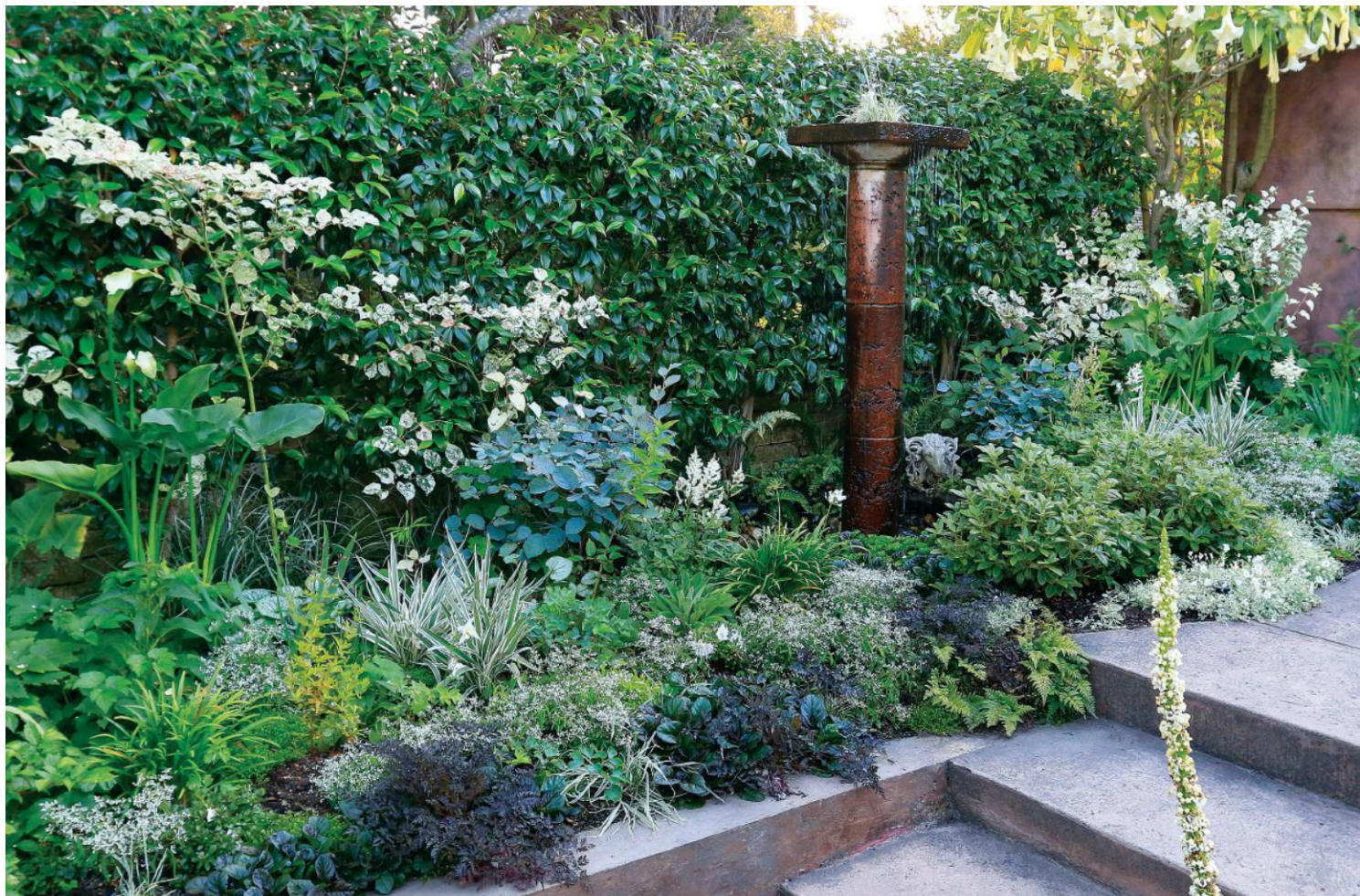


The Tucson, Arizona, garden of Ann Butler starts to shine as dusk falls. Strategic lighting of the garden's pink wall, water feature, and a specimen palm tree beyond create a magical mood.



AS YOU MAKE plans for your garden in the new year, one thing to contemplate is how much time you actually get to enjoy it. For many, daytime hours are spent in the office, running errands, or engaging in other activities away from the garden. At the end of the day, darkness usually precludes spending time outdoors. But it doesn't have to be that way.

A waterfall cascading from a white wall washed with theatrical lighting forms a dramatic focal point in Margot Washburn's evening garden in La Jolla, California.



If you don't have enough time during the day to enjoy your garden, consider turning it into an "after-hours Eden," as Lia Leendertz, author of *The Twilight Garden*, puts it. She offers multiple reasons to create a night garden: the climate in which you live might be cooler and more comfortable in the evening; the somewhat mystical aesthetic of a moonlit landscape appeals to you; or you simply relish evening meals and entertaining *al fresco*. It could also be a combination of all of these.

Above: White is the dominant theme in this view of Ann Nichols's garden in Oakland, California, which includes a variety of plants with white flowers and/or foliage and an off-white sheep's head sculpture at the base of the pillar water feature. Right: In this nook framed by fragrant star jasmine, Nichols has hung a large mirror on the fence to reflect light and create the illusion of more space.



JUDE PARKINSON-MORGAN (2)

APPEAL TO ALL THE SENSES

"An evening garden is all about mood," says Florida-based garden designer Kerry Harvey. "You're not going to see as much of the garden, so I would definitely concentrate on the other senses."

To help you plan the garden, sit outside one night and note what you experience. As dusk approached one evening in mid-May, I put my senses to this test in my small woodland garden in Oakland, California. I lit the fire pit, kicked back in an Adirondack chair, and closed my eyes. A mockingbird sang. Periodic breezes created a soothing rustle among the bamboos growing in large containers nearby. The fire crackled and popped. Occasionally, the sweet aroma of unseen flowers wafted by. Dogs barked in the distance and the whir of traffic on the distant freeway sounded like the ocean. Opening my eyes, I glimpsed the Japanese maples by the deck, underlit to showcase the delicate foliage and cast shadows that seemed to dance in the breeze.

This simple, mindful act only took a few minutes and brought me a new appreciation for my garden. Being able to enjoy it during the day *and* at night was like having two gardens in one.

PLANTS WITH GREAT NIGHTTIME ATTRIBUTES

When it comes to what to plant in an evening garden, look for shrubs, trees, vines, herbaceous perennials, and annuals that have bright leaves and white flowers. These reflect available light, whether it's from an outdoor lantern, the flames of a fire pit, or from the moon.

Real estate agent Ann Nichols curates a shady corner plot in her renowned Oakland, California, garden with an impressive collection of shrubs and herbaceous perennials—all thoughtfully layered in a harmonious arrangement of shapes, textures, and sizes. White-flowering selections of night-scented *Brugmansia* × *candida* share the spotlight with silvery-leaved Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' and 'Looking Glass'), variegated Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica* 'Variegata') with its cream-mottled green foliage, and white-flowered *Anemone* × *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'. Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), an evergreen vine with abundant small, white, star-shaped flowers, spills over chest-high white walls nearby, captivating visitors with its bracingly sweet scent.

Resources

The Evening Garden by Peter Loewer. Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2002.

The Moonlit Garden by Scott Ogden. Taylor Trade Publishing, Boulder, CO, 1998.

The Twilight Garden by Lia Leendertz. Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL, 2011.

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CHOOSING PLANTS FOR THE GARDEN

An exceptional evening garden smells wonderful and has plants that seem to glow in the dark because of the luminosity of their foliage and/or flowers. For maximum effect, use selections from each category. Plants that are not hardy in your region can be grown in containers. (For hardiness information on the plants listed below, see page 58.) —P.L.C.

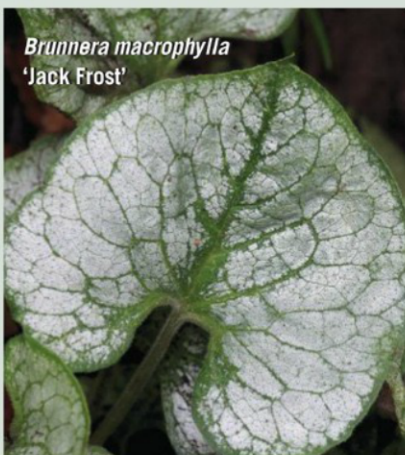
White Flowers

There are so many white-flowered ornamental plants that listing them would be impractical. Plants such as sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum* sp.), and snowball bush (*Viburnum opulus* 'Roseum') produce mainly white blossoms, while white-flowered species or selections of numerous other genera are easy to find. The key is to choose plants with overlapping bloom times so you can enjoy the longest period of display.

Bright or Reflective Foliage

Bee sage (*Salvia apiana*)
Chalk dudleya (*Dudleya brittonii*)
Dusty miller (*Jacobaea maritima*, formerly *Senecio cineraria*)
Euphorbia characias 'Tasmanian Tiger'
Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*)
Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*)
Lilyturf (*Liriope spicata* 'Silver Dragon')
Mexican orange (*Choisya ternata* 'Aztec Pearl')

Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost')
Silvermound (*Artemisia schmidtiana*)
Snow-in-summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*)
Variegated Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus* 'Variegata')
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)



Fragrance

The following plants have sweet-scented flowers that can be enjoyed in evening or a fragrance that is most pronounced after sunset. Asterisks indicate night-bloomers.

Angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia* × *candida*)
Daturas (*Datura innoxia* and *D. wrightii*)
Evening primrose (*Oenothera* spp.)
Flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana sylvestris*)*
Four 'o clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)
Fragrant tea olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*)
Gladiolas (*Gladiolus murielae* and *G. tristis*)*
Madagascar jasmine (*Stephanotis floribunda*)
Moonflower vine (*Ipomoea alba*)*
Night-blooming jasmine (*Cestrum nocturnum*)*
Night-scented stock (*Matthiola longipetala*)*
Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)
Sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*)
Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*)

Nichols chose the plants for their attractive leaves and variety of bloom times. “That way, something’s always coming and something’s always going,” she says of this succession planting that allows gardens in mild climates to look nice year round. “But it’s really all about the foliage.”

Richard Turner, editor emeritus of *Pacific Horticulture* magazine, also suggests thin-leafed trees with open frameworks, “like Japanese maples, so that when you are sitting or lying under them the moonlight shines through.”

(For a list of plants that have white flowers, pale foliage, and/or nighttime fragrance, see page 27.)

GO LIGHT WITH HARDSCAPE AND ACCENTS

Pale hardscape elements and accents can add instant beauty to the nightscape. In the Florida coastal region where Harvey lives and works, she says crushed white seashells are often used to pave and illuminate pathways. If you can’t find crushed seashells, though, fine granite in a light hue does the trick just as well.

In the Nichols garden, a weathered, off-white, concrete ram’s head sculpture tucked in the shade garden next to a columnar dripping fountain echoes the variegated foliage and white flowers of the plants around it. On a wooden fence draped with star jasmine, Nichols has hung a large mirror that not only reflects light, but creates the illusion of extra space.



The white pavers and gravel edging in this intricate path help visitors safely navigate the garden in the evening.

INVITING LIGHT

Lighting serves several important functions in the landscape. It illuminates the silhouettes of trees and shrubs, spotlights sculptures and water features, keeps paths safe, defines gathering spaces in the garden, and even deters would-be thieves.

“When you walk into the backyard and it’s largely dark, it is often anything but welcoming at night,” says Washington, D.C.-area landscape lighting designer Mark Oxley, owner of Outdoor Illumination. He has designed and installed outdoor lighting at more than 3,000 residential and commercial properties, including the U.S. Vice President’s Residence, Mount Vernon Estate, and Dumbarton Oaks. “But you can change the garden to a different composition at night based on what you decide to light. You can

MARK OXLEY’S PRO TIPS FOR LANDSCAPING WITH LIGHT

Be selective about what you light. “Less is more. It’s really important to be disciplined because the tendency is to light everything, and if you do, you light nothing,” cautions Mark Oxley. “You want your eye to be led to interesting features. You can get a lot done with very few lights or very few elements lit.”

■ Use light to define a space. “You may want to light certain key elements that are fairly close in to make a space more intimate. In other cases, you may want to see the full depth of the property by borrowing trees or other objects of interest in the distance by projecting the light out to them.”

■ Light from above whenever possible. “Place fixtures in trees or on structures high up to create a moonlit effect. People are most accustomed to lighting that comes from above, so it feels natural to start with, and, in addition to that, there are no visible fixtures.”

■ Install lights on limbs rather than on the trunk of the tree. “Mounting a light fixture on a tree limb and pointing it straight down is the best way to reduce glare. You’ll also get more interesting shadows if there are other limbs below. If you mount a light right on the trunk of the tree, the tree would block 30 percent of the area that could be lit, and inevitably, you’ll have to point it straight down, which means you will have a big hot spot right below the fixture on the trunk itself.”

■ Uplight for dramatic effect and to complement downlighting. “Uplighting is not expected. It’s different, more focused on one element, usually brighter, and creates drama. When you combine downlighting and uplighting, you’re almost guaranteed to hit it out of the park.”

■ LED is the way to glow. Oxley says he works almost exclusively now with LED lighting. “It’s getting better every year, more versatile, and there are more options in terms of color temperature, color rendering, dimmability, softness and brightness.” Plus, it’s long-lasting and better for the environment, using 80 percent less energy and far less wire.

—P.L.C.

make a decision about how much of the garden you want to see—and how much you want your guests to see.”

Oxley says the best lighting looks natural. “The objective is when you walk onto the property, you don’t even know for sure there’s lighting. Then you turn it off, and you’re like, OK, there’s lighting there.” (For Oxley’s tips on lighting an evening garden, see the sidebar above.)

DOUBLE THE ENJOYMENT

If you’re used to thinking you can only enjoy your garden during the day, try some of the ideas offered here. I hope I’ve inspired you to take a fresh look at your landscape and imagine how you can get twice the pleasure from it.

Paul Lee Cannon is a freelance writer who enjoys relaxing in his evening garden in Oakland, California.

Craig Quirk and Larry Neill, who live just outside Portland, Oregon, worked with designer Laura Crockett of Garden Diva Designs to transform their garden—named “Floramagoria” because of the abundance of flowers and foliage together with often cheeky artwork and whimsical accents—into a verdant paradise that’s as inviting at night as it is during the day.

“I always wanted fire and water together,” Quirk explains of the garden’s design inspiration. “The fire pit butts up against the concrete gunnera leaf [designed by artists George Little and David Lewis]

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: *Inspiration from a Pacific Northwest Garden*

which is actually a fountain built into a little pond.” The backdrop for the fountain and blue glass fire pit, designed by Gina Nash of Experienced Materials, is a low wall painted a warm orange. In the pond, papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) and elephant ear (*Alocasia* spp.) lend a lush, tropical vibe.

The sweet scent of a large potted angel’s trumpet (*Brugmansia* spp.) fills the air between the fire pit and a spacious dining pavilion with bamboo-framed roof. Underneath hangs a custom metalwork chandelier, also by Nash, whose “kind of subterranean” design of cutout bugs, tiny reptiles, ferns and Venus flytraps, references amusing decorative motifs throughout Quirk and Neill’s playful plot.

Additional lighting in the garden includes uplighting a giant sequoia in the shade bed and of a bamboo planted behind the orange wall by the fire pit.

“Before, the dining area was just a big table and chairs on the patio, right off the house, so we put the pavilion out in the garden,” says Quirk. “It was a conscious decision to get us out in the garden more.” —P.L.C.



A lit firepit in the Quirk-Neill garden is an invitation for visitors to pull up a chair and linger. Inset: The homeowners and their friends gather under a whimsical custom metal chandelier.

