

Features

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Limited Space? No Problem.

Ellen C. Wells

With more and more condominiums, townhomes and small urban and suburban residences being constructed, the space allotted for homeowners to enjoy their personal outdoor space is shrinking. But there's so much more they can do than lay down a patio and stick a small grill and sad patio set on it! A mini oasis complete with trees and shrubs—and a lovely patio set—is within their grasp. They just need to be shown the possibilities.

Your garden center and landscape design teams could likely use some inspiration and tips, too. *Green Profit* gathered some ground rules from four small-space design pros. From dwarf varieties to tricks of the eye, even the smallest of spaces can be strategically planned to feel like an estate.



Pictured: Amanda Thomsen has been using A LOT of Hydrangea Little Lime in her designs lately. No wonder—it's gorgeous!

- *A consistent border gives a garden clean lines.*
- *Take advantage of vertical spaces as well as add in some non-plant items such as a trellis or artwork.*

Amanda Thomsen, garden designer, garden consultant and blogger at Kiss My Aster!, Chicagoland, Illinois

Go big. "Front door pots are too usually three sizes too small. I admit, it's hard to gauge scale when you're out shopping for pots. But the taller the house, the bigger the pots need to be. No one has a house small enough for pots less than 20-inches, and pots larger than 20-inches are hard to fit in the trunk and get home. They become very expensive at that size and take a ton of soil. Containers are the eyebrows of your house (and we all know how important impeccable brows are)."

Jen Strobel, design consultant, Sloat Garden Center, Mill Valley, California

Less is more. “Trying to pack in a bunch of different plant varieties in a small space can look jumbled or chaotic. Choose a simple palette and repeat. A consistent border throughout helps add color while maintaining clean lines.”

Maximize the vertical. “A great way to add height, dimension and color to a small space is using containers. A pop of color at the entrance to the garden or next to a trellis with a container can be a really nice addition, as well as help compliment any patio sets and cushions.”

Jen Strobel’s Favorites for Small Spaces

Trees: Acer, Magnolia Little Gem, Prunus Kwanzan, Dwarf Lemon, Pomegranate, Espalier trees

Shrubs: Acacia Cousin Itt, Boxwood Globes, Myers Asparagus Fern, Lavender Phenomenal

Perennials: Geranium Rozanne, Digitalis, *Erigeron karvinskianus*, Salvia

Grasses: Pennisetum Little Bunny, Lomandra Breeze, *Carex pansa*, Ophiopogon, Liriope

Linda Gombert, owner/operator of Tulinda's Garden, Cocoa, Florida

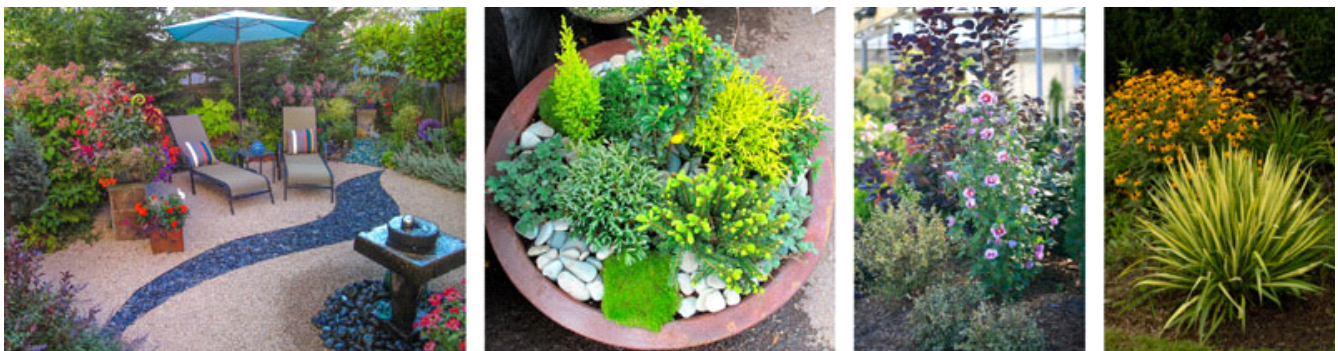
Think ahead. “Absolutely consider how big the plants you’re thinking of using will get. It is surprising how often that doesn’t seem to enter the equation.”

Take advantage of “up.” “Build a trellis that you can grow vines on or hang baskets from.”

Think of non-plant items. “Use walls for non-plant items like interesting artwork or just a paint color combo that works well with your planting scheme. Sometimes a design can be very effective with something like a small water feature and a very small number of plants.”

Linda Gombert’s Favorite for Small Southern Spaces

“One of my first considerations for Central and South Florida is always Costus Red Button. It’s basically vertically oriented, usually has color, always has great texture, doesn’t run amok (like some other gingers and heliconias) and is easy to maintain.”



Christina Salwitz, designer and author at The Personal Garden Coach, Renton, Washington.

Repetition. “Repeating one color, one idea or one texture provides continuity to a small-space design. Using striking foliage color or pattern for the base of a design is one of the best ways to do that for year-round interest or just a summer adventure in trying on bold ideas.”

Itty bitty BIG plants are fun! “Not into fairy gardens but like the idea of small-scale starter plants? There have never been more mini and uber-dwarf options for you to experiment with in containers in sophisticated and modern ways.”

Just be sure you make a plan for what to do with them as they mature.”

Details matter! “Look to delight the eyes with the unexpected element. Not enough room for a trio of pots? Make the third element to the duo a piece of unusual art. Or make the focal point a pot SO shiny, bold and luscious it can’t be ignored, whether it features a simple design or an over-the-top, explosion of luscious proportions.”

More is MORE! “Small-space landscaping doesn’t have to be like a bad apartment design with all the oversized furniture pushed against the walls. By using bold color, art, fragrance, dramatic design and even movement from a water feature, you can easily address challenges like privacy and street noise by keeping the focus for the senses up close.”

Pictured: Use bold color, movement and dramatic design to address small-space landscape challenges. Photo Credit: Christina Salwitz

• *Use mini varieties of plants such as these conifers in containers—just have a plan for them when they mature out of the pot. Photo Credit: Christina Salwitz*

• *Hibiscus Purple Pillar.*

• *Professor Matthew Chappell thinks yuccas (such as Color Guard, pictured) in the small-space garden are “yummy”!*

Jessica DeGraaf’s list of small-statured trees and shrubs from Proven Winners ColorChoice:

- Bloomerang Dwarf Pink Syringa
- Gem Box Ilex (2020 landscape shrub of the year)
- Low Scape Mound Aronia
- Pugster Amethyst Buddleia
- Lo & Behold Blue Chip Jr. Buddleia
- Invincibelle Wee White Hydrangea arborescens
- Tiny Tuff Stuff Hydrangea serrata
- My Monet Purple Effect Weigela
- Perfecto Mundo Double Pink Rhododendron
- Columnar varieties such as the Pillar series of Hibiscus and Laced Up Sambucus

Nursery & Landscape Insider e-newsletter editor and University of Georgia professor Matthew Chappell had one or two (or nearly 20!) suggestions for small-statured items to use in small spaces.

Edgeworthia chrysantha

Cupressus nootkatensis Pendula

Juniperus scopulorum Sparkling Skyrocket

Cryptomeria japonica Rein's Dense Jade

Thuja occidentalis Hetz Midget or Nigra

Thuja plicata Stoneham Gold

Lantana x Chapel Hill Gold

Forsythia x *intermedia* Arnold Dwarf

Pieris floribunda

Cytisus scoparius

Daphnae x *burkwoodii*

Vaccinium vitis-idaea

Yuccas... yummy yuccas. Lots of cultivars

Skimmia japonica or *S. reevesian*

Cullina vulgaris Silver Knight

Chaenomeles speciosa Jet Trail

Genista tinctora

Spiraea albiflora (sometimes listed as a cultivar of *S. japonica* incorrectly)

Leucothoe axillaris **GP**