

FABULOUS FOLIAGE

LEAVES are among the **MOST SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS** to be considered when planning and planting visually exciting garden displays. Think **LONG** and **HARD** about using the foliage aspect of plants to best advantage, including an entire palette of perennials, trees, shrubs AND vines!

COLOUR

Many leaves are green, but some may be blue-green, others chartreuse, still others a deep purple. Some foliage is variegated – white/green or yellow/green – and still other plants have peach, coral or lime coloured foliage; some plants' foliage have veins of a contrasting colour. Some perennials' foliage changes as it ages; still other plants put on a spectacular display of foliage in the fall.

Sources

Glattstein, J. (2013) *Consider the Leaf: Foliage in Garden Design*. Timber Press.
Chapman, K. & Salwitz, C. (2013). *Fine Foliage: Elegant Plant Combinations for Garden and Container*. Lynn's Press.
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ASPECTS OF FOLIAGE TO CONSIDER

TEXTURE

Refers to size, shape and orientation of a plant's leaves. There are three types of plant texture: **FINE, MEDIUM, COARSE**

Plants with **fine foliage** have small, feathery, or narrow leaves with few gaps between them (ferns, groundcovers). Plants of **medium texture** fall somewhere on the spectrum between coarse and fine texture; their leaves are not large, nor small. Many plants fall into this category (heuchera, phlox). Plants with **coarse foliage** have large leaves and/or large gaps between the leaves (hosta, bergenia, bearded iris). Texture also includes the appearance of the foliage: shiny, smooth, velvety, ruffled, woolly, with a metallic sheen, or filigreed like lace.

The **TRICK** is to strategically add both coarse and fine textured plants between those with medium texture to create a balanced look.

FORM

Form relates to the shape and size of a plant or flower. A plant's form is commonly referred to as its habit, and there are three basic plant habits: **VERTICAL/UPRIGHT, MOUNDING, and HORIZONTAL/PROSTRATE**. The foliage will be just as varied. Balanced garden designs include plants of all three forms.



The key thing to keep in mind is **CONTRAST**. Knowing that foliage is often the focal point of a perennial bed, it is important to combine plants with different habits (spiky, round, flat, mound, fountain-like), foliage texture and colour to keep them from all blending together into one large mass. When planting a perennial bed, one strikes to achieve **BALANCE** as well as **VARIETY**.