

ROCK

THE LANDSCAPE

SINCE THE EARTH IS PRIMARILY MADE UP OF ROCK—WHY NOT SHOW SOME OFF IN YOUR GARDEN. WITH A LITTLE IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY A DECORATIVE STONE CAN ADD A NEW DIMENSION TO ANY LANDSCAPE DESIGN.

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achunnngggg! That's the sound a shovel makes when it stops with bone-jarring force as it makes contact with a stubborn rock in the hole in which you are about to plant your tree. Either you find a weakness and pry that rascal out of there or you move over a few feet and try again. Regardless of your last difficult experience with a rock in the landscape, when displayed artfully a large decorative stone can add a new dimension to your garden. There have been stacks of articles in recent years suggesting that more water features be used in gardens. You have heard it said, "no garden is complete without water." The same can be said of beautiful stone. Since the earth is made up primarily of rock, let's show it off in our gardens ■ There are two basic categories of stone for use in landscape—quarried stone and natural stone. Patios, walks, rock veneer walls, and the like are constructed primarily of quarried stone. That is, rock that has been mined and cut for specific uses. The other classification of rock is "natural stone"—those irregularly-shaped masses that more than just hurt if dropped on your foot. Natural stones could be subdivided into one-man stones (those which could be moved by one person), two-man stones (either a hulk or two people are necessary), or Bob-cat rocks (don't even consider moving without some equipment).

BY GARRY L. MENENDEZ, P.H.D.





THERE ARE TWO BASIC CATEGORIES OF STONE FOR USE IN LANDSCAPE—QUARRIED STONE AND NATURAL STONE. QUARRIED STONE IS MINED AND CUT FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES SUCH AS PATIOS, WALKWAYS AND WALLS. NATURAL STONES ARE THOSE IRREGULAR-SHAPED MASSES FOUND LYING ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE. NATURAL STONES COULD BE SUBDIVIDED INTO ONE-MAN STONES, TWO-MEN STONES, AND STONES YOU SHOULDN'T CONSIDER MOVING WITHOUT EQUIPMENT. ONE SHOULD BE SENSIBLE WHEN PLANTING STONES IN A GARDEN. USE YOUR HEAD AND NOT YOUR BACK! RENTING SOME EQUIPMENT IS FAR MORE INTELLIGENT AND CHEAPER THAN RENTING A HOSPITAL ROOM.

CREATE A GARDEN FOR CONTEMPLATION WITH A BALANCE OF WELL-PLACED STONES, PLANTS, AND WATER. THE ACTUAL PHYSICAL PLACEMENT OF STONES IN A GARDEN CAN HAVE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING. ASIAN CULTURES PLACE SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS ON HOW A STONE IS DISPLAYED. THE JAPANESE BELIEVE THAT PLACING A ROCK AGAINST ITS NATURE INVITES A VENGEFUL SPIRIT INTO THE GARDEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CHINESE USE UNIQUE STONES AS SCULPTURE IN THE DESIGN OF THEIR GARDENS. THE "SPIRIT" OF WATER CAN BE ATTAINED BY PLACING RIVER SLICKS AND BOULDERS IN A DRY RIVER BED.





Look at any beautiful garden and you will see a balance between plants, water, and stone. A stone is forever. It doesn't die or need watering. Nothing can exude a feeling of contemplation and timelessness quite the same as a craggy, moss covered boulder. A well-placed rock in the landscape can radiate a sense of permanency. Harmony, scale, and balance are portrayed when a group of "rock buddies" collect and mingle with some softer, more vulnerable plant materials.

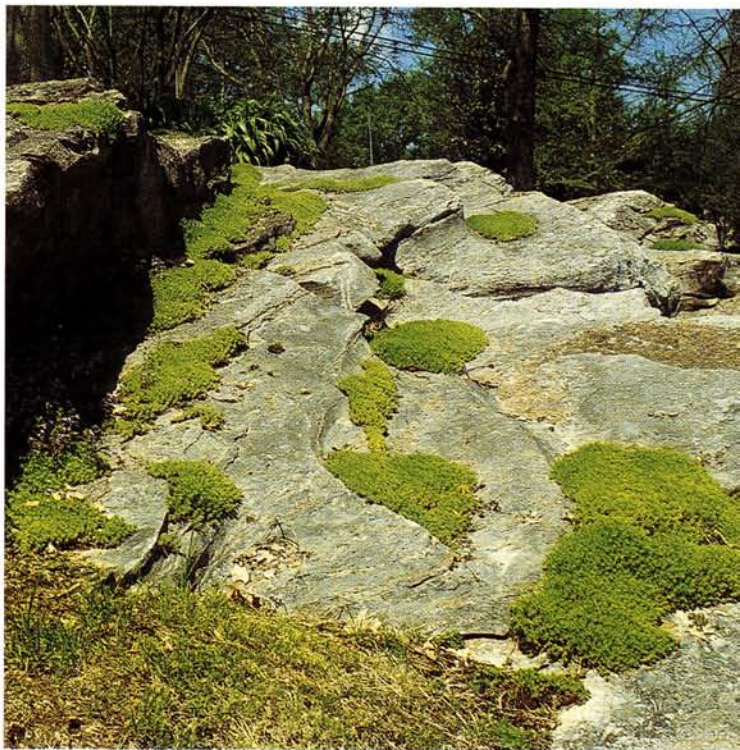
Stone can also create a sense of place and regionalism within a landscape. Granite feels at home in a northeastern garden much in the same way that sandstone may say, "you're in desert country." Some may think that the very permanence from which rock gets its solid reputation can also make it a dull garden guest. Not so. The colors that permeate from a focal stone as light and shadow patterns wash over it can give subtle life to this inanimate mass. A gentle rain shower can coax the pink out of Tennessee marble, and a dusting of snow may create sparkle atop a basalt boulder.

The actual physical placement of stones in a garden can have philosophical meaning. Asian cultures place spiritual emphasis on how a rock is displayed. The Chinese technique often involves utilizing unique stones as outdoor sculptures or exclamation points in the garden. The Japanese attitude, however, is to situate rocks in a totally natural fashion. They believe that placing a rock against its nature (contradictory to its natural appearance) invites a vengeful spirit into the garden.

The concepts of implied landscape and borrowed scenery are also evident in the Oriental style of garden design. One character-laden stone surrounded by small, flat river rocks can simulate an island when one reduces the micro-landscape. The phrase "making a mountain out of a molehill" was never more applicable as when one experiences a Japanese garden in which a series of tapering stones are viewed from the perspective of a miniature mountain range. If a stream isn't practical in a particular landscape, the same effect can be attained by using a dry river bed composed of river slicks and boulders. This "spirit" of water rather than its actual presence gives a sense of metaphorical meaning to a garden.

So, once you have discovered some great rocks, now what? During installation, one of the most overlooked "rules" of rock placement is to plant these treasures. If an accent boulder is just sitting on top of the ground it will have that unstable "I just fell off the truck" appearance. Digging away some soil and burying a stone up to its widest point of girth will give it a much more natural appearance. When setting stones you should also look for their best side—just as you would with any plant material. Determine the optimal viewing angle and orient the surface with the most character and interest in that direction.

Clustering rocks with others or with accentuating plant material is another idea to consider. Think about the overall form of the stone. Does it call for some low, creeping vegetation or would some upright ornamental grasses be more harmonious? When placing rocks in groups, consider some basic principles of design such as balance, rhythm, and contrast. Use a variety of sizes but don't use wimpy rock



PLANT SOME STONES IN YOUR GARDEN. THEY NEVER NEED WATERING, THEY DON'T DIE—STONES ARE FOREVER. A WELL-PLACED ROCK IN THE LANDSCAPE CAN RADIATE A SENSE OF PERMANENCY AND TIMELESSNESS.

fragments (anything you could pick up with one hand). On the other hand, accept the fact that macho rocks are heavy. Use your head and not your back. Renting some equipment is far more intelligent (and cheaper) than renting a hospital room. If a rock is to be placed by itself, it should be a real focal point. Otherwise, use the buddy system. Place a central or focal stone first and then build up visually by locating companions nearby that will carry the eye toward it.

Using decorative rock in the landscape can be meaningful, satisfying, and fun. A huge amount of satisfaction comes from knowing a young tree you have just planted will provide enormous value for generations. Complementing these plants with ancient rocks which may be around for another million years (or until the Cubs win the World Series) can be equally rewarding. 🌿

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Suggested Reading—Wan, Du. *Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest*. University of California Press, 1961.; Foster, H. Lincoln. *Rock Gardening*. Timber Press, 1982.; Davidson, A. K. *The Art of Zen Gardening*. Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983.; Whitner, Jan Kowalczewski. *Stonescaping, A Guide to Using Stone in Your Garden*. Garden Way Publishing, 1982.



A CLUSTER OF ROCKS IN YOUR GARDEN MINGLED WITH SOFTER PLANT MATERIAL CAN PORTRAY A SENSE OF HARMONY, SCALE, AND BALANCE. CONSIDER THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN WHEN PLACING ROCKS IN GROUPS.

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