

Simply Elegant



Simply Elegant. What was once just an island of turf is now a grand entrance to the house. Whether you have a big or small house, this look can be achieved with ease.

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I am not sure if this is a good or a bad thing??? But I do know that when you landscape your home, you want your garden to be beautiful, not only for yourself, but of course, for others. With this in mind, you want a design that is fitting for the house and its surroundings.

This is the case with the Erwins' home and garden. I was breathless when I saw this wonderful house for the first time. I was so grateful that Robert and Martha Ellen Erwin wanted me to create a master design for their home. They wanted a new look. It was not that the existing yard looked horrible, but just tired. I know it is hard for most of you, but yes, your landscape needs to really be fluffed or redone every 10 years or so. Now this does not mean you have to take everything out and start all over, but it does mean that some selected exhausted plants need to go and certain mature specimens should stay. We want the yard to still look established, but tasteful and fresh as well.

When I drove up the circular drive of the Erwins' house for my first visit, I pictured an elegant avenue of trees leading to the front doors. Since the house is positioned on a corner lot, this visually draws your eyes to the front entrance of the house. We planted an avenue of columnar hornbeam trees (*Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'). This avenue is so dramatic and so stately. You don't have to have a large house to create an avenue of trees. Just four trees will do the trick. Also, you don't have to sacrifice having a lush lawn with so many trees. Columnar trees such as these hornbeams grow straight up and only get about 6 feet wide. There is plenty of light for everything that is underplanted to thrive and prosper. Need I say any more!!! Just do it! Create drama in your front landscape.

Since the house has a European feel, I designed a more formal look. My design studies in England sure did come in handy here. We underplanted the avenue of trees with long, narrow flowerbeds outlined in 'Wintergreen' boxwood (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'Wintergreen', aka *B. microphylla* var. *koreana* 'Wintergreen'). The centers of the beds are planted with *Spiraea japonica* 'Gold Mound' and drifts of beautiful tall purple coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*). The contrast of textures and colors is magnificent, plus so low maintenance. We also have color for four seasons. For the winter months, just plant daffodil bulbs between the coneflowers. True, the spiraeas are deciduous, but the evergreen boxwood makes everything all right.

Instead of taking out the lawn between the two avenues of trees, we placed large-cut flagstone stepping stones. Now guests can walk right up to the doors without walking up the driveway. I don't know why more people don't have pathways from the street to the front door. Do you really want your guests to walk around cars to get to your house? Please, I don't think so ... Human nature is to take the shortest route. Put a pathway right through your yard to your door. No need to take out all your lawn. Turf looks great between stepping stones.

△ Large flagstone stepping stones in a double row create a beautiful walkway that is not only visually gorgeous but totally functional.

Long narrow beds can create a bold statement. From the street to the house, your eye goes straight to the front door. ▽



GARDENPROFILE

Natural flagstone stepping stones look clean and organic. You don't want to use rough field-stone, but instead any smooth rock will do. At the Erwin residence, I picked out stone with brown and sandy undertones to go with the colors of the stucco of the house. Everything blends and complements each other. The stepping stones are wide. You want two people to be able to walk together to the front door. You also want to stay in scale with the house. Since there are two front doors here, a wide walkway was a must.

All the bed lines are square. Again, be different!!! Most of us, and therefore your neighbors, have curved flowerbed lines. When possible, outline your flowerbeds with natural cut stone. Cut stone gives a finished look that is timeless and durable. Stone is rather inexpensive and readily available in most areas. The stone also matches our flagstone stepping stones.

The front avenue is equally impressive from all angles and viewpoints. WOW!!!!▷

If you know me, you know I love hedged 'Wintergreen' boxwood. Green and clean.....▽







Columnar hornbeams are vertical trees with little width. A perfect tree that will never swallow up your sunlight.



Choose more than one focal point but only a few. The four huge concrete pots capture your attention; planted in the center are three common yews (*Taxus baccata*), but the seasonal color planted around each grouping of yews gives color and boldness. We used mixed hanging baskets in each pot for instant gratification. Plant your pots full and lush for impact. We also mixed in some red agastache (*Agastache* 'Red Fortune') for an English garden look.

Another focal point is the concrete bench and ironwork. A pathway of crushed granite leads to this restful place in the garden. Two more wooden benches at the end of the avenue allow family and guests to sit and enjoy this growing landscape. Most of us usually sit in our backyards, but why not relax in the front yard as well, especially if you have children that love to play with neighbor kids out front? Just sit and enjoy the kids playing while talking to your adult neighbors. It makes for a happier neighborhood. Trust me, it does!!!

The front flowerbeds along the house are full of different groupings of plants. Huge boxwood on both sides of the front doors mimic the avenue of hornbeam trees. Large square plantings of 'Sum and Substance' hosta mixed with the 'Big Daddy' variety softly say hello. We even planted the old-fashioned golden euonymus (*Euonymus japonicus* 'Ovatus Aureus'). What a wonderful plant. The golden yellow foliage is so



colorful when mixed in with blue hydrangeas. Don't forget to plant large drifts of seasonal color. Changing the annuals with the seasons makes the landscape look fresh year round. The natural color of the stucco allows us to use whatever colors we want. Remember, no rules apply. Just plant what you like. With this European garden, color is so important.

Endless possibilities ... Stay true to the look of your home, but always add design elements that give a little contrast and make a statement. Plant in large groupings and drifts for fullness and interest. Never, and I repeat, never look like your neighbors. Make your home like the Erwins' – the talk of the neighborhood, in a good way, of course!!!

Happy Gardening! 🌿

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△ **Seasonal color planted in a design as shown provides major impact. Don't be cheap! Buy and plant more than just one flat.**

Top left: A circle design in the back of one of the two teak benches allows you to view the landscape from behind.