

Real Estate

GREEN HOUSE Flowerless, yet marvellous C. S. Bewli

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Whenever one talks about a garden, the first image that comes to mind is that of colourful flowers. People often talk about rose garden, bougainvillea garden or a dahlia garden, but it is seldom that people discuss about the foliage which is the real backbone of any successful garden. Flowers are seasonal and often fleeting, but to have year-round splashes of colour without much of maintenance, ornamental foliage plants are the ones that always have something beautiful to look at. The key element that makes a statement in a flowerless garden is the long-lasting foliage beauty of different colours, textures and sizes that can take on any conventional garden.



Agave



Spiderplant



Yucca



Crotons

Plants and greenery in the front yard always give a welcoming feeling. Being the entrance, this area assumes importance as everyone who passes by gets to watch it. With a good design concept and aesthetics, it can be made to appear stunning and welcoming to give the effect of an inviting outdoor extension of the house.

Most of the people in tricity have front yards of different sizes, even if the yard is tiny, it can be made attractive. By giving a smart facelift this space can be transformed into a beautiful de-stressing garden.

The demanding pace of modern life leaves little space and time to indulge in the pleasures of gardening because of which many are looking to keep gardening tasks to a manageable level. For this, a flowerless garden is an option, especially for those who are unable to get the services of a gardener or have enough time to take care of their plants themselves because by default such gardens need low maintenance. To further reduce maintenance the garden should be designed to keep the things simple.

Foliage plants that can be important features of such a garden can include species of caladium, calathea, croton, dieffenbachia, epiphytic cactus, fern, hosta, marantha, monstera, peperomia, philodendron, pothos, syngonium, begonia, bromeliads, hybrids etc.

The list of colourful, robust and flowerless plants to decorate any flowerless garden which in no way is inferior to any conventional garden is endless. Some of the colourful plants that exude beauty throughout the year are:

- Peperomia magnolifolia, both with green and variegated leaves and obtusifolia and clusifolia with variegated leaves are excellent container plants and can also be put in beds. They are slow-growing and shade-loving perennials.
- Crotons are one of the most colourful perennial shrubs that are sought after by every landscapist due to their wide range of colours, from yellow and pale green through orange and red to almost blackish and with varied leaf shapes. Most of the species form bushy shrubs with a height of about 90 cm and spread of about 60 cm in moist and well lighted conditions.

Chlorophytum comosum with broader grassy leaves that arch gracefully and are variegated cream and green are very ornamental. These can be grown in pots, in beds and also look stunning in a hanging basket. For healthy growth, they must get bright light with some direct sunlight and plentiful of watering during growth period.

- Variegated Ficus Benjamina about two metres tall can have as much an impact in a garden as a fine piece of furniture or a painting. It is an easy-to-grow plant that must get bright light with some direct sunlight, but otherwise accepts all kinds of weather.
- Agaves are hardy, easy-to-grow and difficult to kill rosette forming succulent plants that offer a wide selection of shapes, colour, sizes and forms. The long leathery and fleshy leaves with terminal spines have great longevity and give an ornamental look throughout the year. The smaller species such as agave filifera, parviflora, titanota, stricta 'nana' and victoria reginae are excellent plants for mini gardens; the medium-sized plants such as agave parryi, attenuata and bovicornuta are suitable for any landscaping. A couple of plants in designer containers or in the bed will look stunning.
- Yuccas are widely grown as architectural plants that provide a dramatic accent to landscape design. One tall spineless Yucca elephantipes about 2 meters tall placed at the rear can add an element of height.
- Generating ground cover with foliage plants is an excellent aid in landscaping of a flowerless garden and can be an alternative for those who do not have any lawn in reflecting greenery under the trees or in shaded areas. It also helps in preventing the growth of weeds and makes a garden low maintenance. Cuphea hyssopifolia, alternanthera dentate, Ajuga spp and ivy as ground cover plants do well here.

Metallic sculptures and other garden accessories are the other elements that can add to the appeal of your "flowerless" garden.

How you can make a small garden look spacious

- Create a small lawn in a circular, oval or any other designer-shape using curves to avoid corners.
- Use smaller tiles, pebbles or gravel for creating a path.
- Add an element of height to the garden, by covering the boundary wall with a flowerless climber ivy, which can also be trained to climb over trellises, arches and pillars. To give some different colour to the background use climbers such as begonia, ussualis and heliotropium that have lush green leaves and stunning cluster of flowers.
- Create different levels in the garden as this will make it look bigger.
- Use a well placed mirror to reflect light and give the appearance of more space.
- Place a table or a sculpture on one side of the lawn rather than at the center of the garden.
- Place smaller plants in front and the taller ones.
- Use plants of different sizes, as use of only small plants in a small garden will make the garden look smaller.

— The writer is President of National Cactus and Succulent Society of India