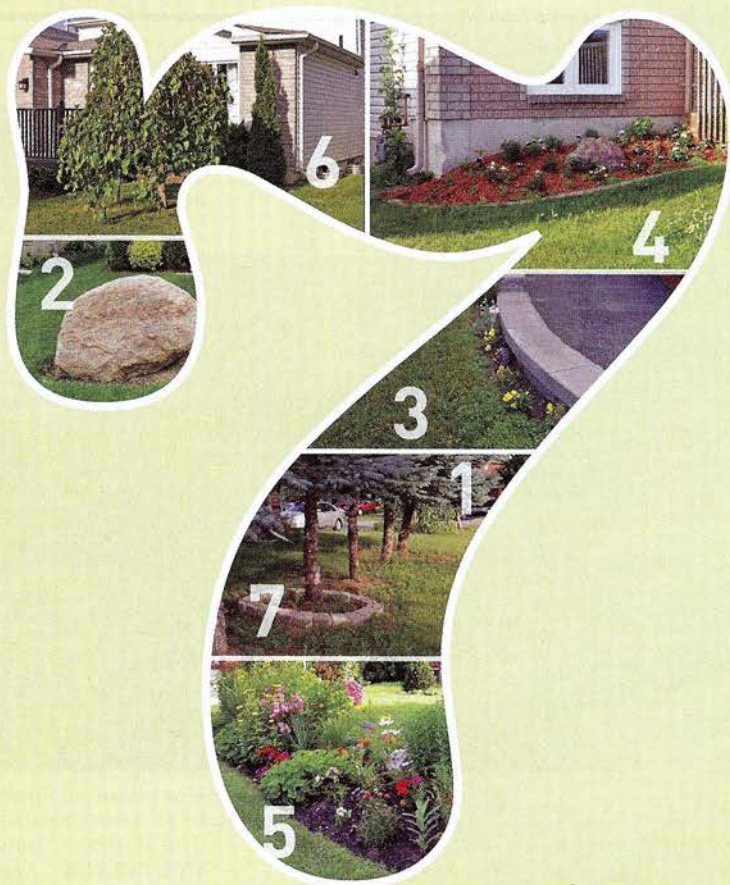


PHOTOS AND STORY BY MELANIE REKOLA

THE SEVEN DEADLY *landscape sins*

Homeowners far and wide, fall to your knees like the sinners you are! Don't be surprised if your property suffers more than one of these common garden evils. But take heart; most can be easily atoned. Continued on page 40



gardening

1. GEOMETRIC SHRUBS Woody plants are living things and not symmetrical by nature, therefore each shrub should not be pruned as a geometric ball, cone or box. These unnatural pruning techniques are an abomination to nature! Compensate by staggering your pruning cuts to give a freer form to deciduous plant material. Evergreens should not be sheared too tightly and don't dare prune out the lower branches of large conifers giving the tree a "mini skirt" look. Instead, let a tree look like a tree and a shrub look like a shrub.

2. BIG BOULDER IN THE FRONT YARD I absolutely love natural stone and the look of boulders placed properly in garden beds, but one giant boulder placed on the front lawn I see plaguing properties everywhere looks very bizarre! Firstly, they are totally out of scale. Secondly, boulders are supposed to look (loosely) like they happened to erode naturally and one huge stone by itself, plunked on the surface, would never happen in nature. Atone by placing stones throughout garden beds in a random pattern, and bury them slightly to give a natural feel.

3. SKINNY WALKWAYS AND SKINNY GARDEN BEDS I see skinny, uncomfortable and out of scale paths/garden beds more often than any other landscape sin indicated here. (Not to mention, the tight and awkward curvaceous lines that frequently accompany them.) A path should be wide enough that two people can walk comfortably together arm in arm, that is, a minimum of four feet wide. Front walkways should be wider and much wider still if your home is large and/or the pathway long. Garden beds need to be at least three feet wide minimum and hopefully much larger somewhere along their shape. A soft and gentle curve always looks better than "wiggly worm" contours.

4. RED MULCH (OR SHOULD I SAY ORANGE?) Dyed red mulch is such a bright hue that it completely detracts from the garden and screams "look at my MULCH!" Bright white and/or shiny white stones have a similar effect. The eye will quickly go to the brightest (and whitest) entity in view first. Surely there are better things to bring focus to, such as a beautiful garden and home! Atone by using black/brown mulch that mimics rich, healthy soil to highlight your horticultural efforts. If you prefer a stone mulch look, use various sizes of river stone that's easy on the eyes.



Avoiding common missteps creates pleasing results in your design plan.



Rule of Thirds: Garden beds next to the house should be at least one-third of the house height in depth; placed boulders should not be out of scale with the rest of the bed.

5. ONE OF EVERYTHING A garden with "one of everything," houses all colours of the rainbow looks cluttered and chaotic. It's like wearing too much jewelry. In nature, plants never occur in just singles, the eye needs rest before moving on to a new colour/texture to feel comfortable. Therefore, repent by avoiding this hodge-podge effect by always planting in groups of varying odd numbers, choosing a small palette of colours and using some repetition of plant materials, bringing continuity to the space.

6. WEEPERS IN THE FRONT YARD A front yard design should be welcoming, whereas weeping trees can look sad and somewhat sinister. They make for an unfriendly exterior and I get the feeling they are crying out "I have the plague...stay away!" Weeping plants are more appropriate placed in larger areas away from the house, perhaps by a pond, where you are trying to create a feeling of calm and serenity. For a warm and welcoming front entrance choose happy upright plant materials instead.

7. SCALE ISSUES AND ODD COMBINATIONS Cramming small plant materials tightly up against the house always looks out of balance. Garden beds around the house should be at least one-third of the house height in depth, and some of the vegetation needs to be of a similar height and mass. Trees always help to ground a home giving it the visual weight necessary. But don't ruin the effect by installing a tree ring around that tree and planting tiny vegetation beneath giving it a polka dot effect. Island beds need to be large; a minimum of 12-feet in fact. And at all costs, avoid the strange combination I see so often of one upright evergreen with two round shrubs at its base. Do you or no one else see that this arrangement is clearly phallic? Garden beds everywhere, repent!

On a final note, your home and garden is a reflection of you. When it comes to all types of fashion, sin or no sin, what matters most is that something makes you feel good, then use it. That's what is most important for happiness is the key to life! Be proud of your personal tastes regardless of what any expert says. **OH**

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