

Chapter 1

Digging into Feng Shui Gardening

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- ▶ Figuring out Feng Shui
 - ▶ Dreaming up a Feng Shui garden
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If you're not quite sure what Feng Shui is or how it can work in your garden, don't worry. We're here to make you fearless about Feng Shui.

In this chapter, we go over the principles of Feng Shui and tell you how to apply them to your garden to create a welcoming environment and much, much more. (Gee, do we sound like a late-night infomercial yet?)

Exploring Feng Shui Basics

Feng Shui, which is a Chinese design philosophy, means literally *wind and water*. In traditional Chinese beliefs, wind and water are the source of all life energy. This life energy, called *chi*, brings abundance and blessings into your environment and your life. So when you're designing according to the principles of Feng Shui, you're really encouraging the chi to flow into and throughout your space (not to mention your life).



The modern approach to Feng Shui that we use in this book is called *Black Hat sect*, and it combines traditional Feng Shui beliefs with Western approaches. While Eastern concepts, such as intuition, play a primary role, Western concepts, such as practicality, aren't overlooked. We discuss this further in Chapter 2.



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Before you can get started on Feng Shui gardening, you need a roadmap to Feng Shui. No, Feng Shui isn't an actual physical location, but you get the idea. By following the guidelines we tell you about, you can plan a garden that not only feels friendly and welcoming, but that actually brings abundance into your life.

Grooving with chi and other Feng Shui principles

Feng Shui, the art of perfect placement, is about allowing life energy (chi) to move through your environment to bring harmony and balance. This good energy brings good stuff into your life.

To find perfect placement and encourage good chi flow, you need to use various Feng Shui principles. We discuss these principles in the following subsections.



In Chapter 3, we discuss in detail the Feng Shui concepts that you can't live without. Then, in Chapter 4, we help you tackle the challenge of getting living energy into your garden. We give you tips on how to keep the energy movin' and groovin'.

Raising the chi

The main goal in Feng Shui gardening is to raise the level of chi in the garden and make sure that it moves smoothly and freely throughout the space. In other words, you have to get rid of barriers to chi, and you need to use Feng Shui fixes (called *cures*) to raise the chi in areas where it may get trapped and stagnate.

You can also use cures to solve the problems that arise when chi moves too quickly through your garden. Chi moving too quickly doesn't do you (or your garden) any good, and can actually help create an unpleasant environment that's agitated instead of relaxed.

Applying the Bagua

The Bagua is your Feng Shui placement map. It symbolizes how your environment is connected to your life. The Bagua, which is shaped like an octagon, has nine Life Sectors that correspond with aspects of your own life. Those nine sectors are

- ✓ Career
- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Family

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- ✓ Wealth
- ✓ Fame
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Children
- ✓ Helpful People
- ✓ T'ai Chi (overall health and well-being)

These Life Sectors have a physical location in your garden and a symbolic location in your life. All the Life Sectors should be present in your garden. If your garden is oddly shaped, one of the sectors may be “missing,” which means that the corresponding area in your life will have problems. So if your oddly shaped garden is missing the Wealth sector, or what would be your Wealth sector is actually in the neighbor’s backyard, you may find yourself losing money or just having “bad luck” — things don’t go your way. See the section below, “Workin’ it,” for more information on placing the Bagua.

According to Feng Shui, enhancing the chi in a Life Sector in your garden increases abundance in that area of your life. So if you need a little more love in your life, make sure the Relationships sector gets the attention it needs. See Chapter 6 for more information about using the Bagua in your garden.

Incorporating the Five Elements

The Five Elements (those qualities that make up everything in the world — Earth, Metal, Water, Wood, and Fire) must all be present and in balance in a Feng Shui garden. The universe is made up of these elements working together, and you want to reflect that in your garden. The elements work together to create a harmonious, welcoming space. How the elements work together is called the *nourishing cycle* of the elements. More information about this can be found in Chapter 3.



However, you have to be careful that you put the right elements together because sometimes the elements can cancel each other out. This is called the *controlling cycle* of the elements. For example, too much Water element can “put out” the Fire element, which leads to unbalance in the garden. For more information on using the elements wisely, see Chapters 3 and 6.

Balancing yin and yang energy

Yin/yang is the idea that life energy can have a passive and an active side. Yin/yang is based on a concept of the universe as containing complementary opposites — qualities that seem to be in



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contrast to each other but that actually work together. For example, soft and hard or light and dark are qualities that complement each other.

In Chapter 2, we show you how to keep passive and active energy (yin/yang) in balance, so that your garden doesn't make people frantic or put them to sleep.

Knowing the benefits of Feng Shui

Not a firm believer in mystical mumbo-jumbo? Well, Feng Shui isn't exactly mystical mumbo-jumbo, but you still may not believe in it. However, the beauty of Feng Shui is that you can apply it and benefit from it, even if you're a bit skeptical.

For instance, if you're not sure raising the chi in your environment can mean a corresponding improvement in your life, at least you'll agree that keeping the clutter down makes your garden more attractive. And paying attention to aesthetics, function, and design as you plan your garden makes your space more appealing and welcoming.

For more on how you can benefit from Feng Shui, see Chapter 4.

Planning Your Feng Shui Garden

Because a Feng Shui garden requires you to balance the Five Elements and pay attention to placement according to the Bagua, you need to think about what you're doing.

A Feng Shui garden doesn't happen by accident. In fact, in Feng Shui, your *intention* (your specific, conscious goal for why you're doing what you're doing) is the most important component. You have to know why you're doing something for it to make sense in a Feng Shui garden. Fortunately, doing something because you like it qualifies!

Choosing a function and a location for your garden

Before the first seed is planted, you can ensure that your garden blossoms with blessings. By having a specific plan and function for your garden (such as relaxation or entertainment) and picking the best location, you're already on the right track.

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According to Feng Shui, certain locations are more favorable than others. A protected location is ideal for a garden. Also beneficial is a garden that isn't exposed to negative chi generated by nearby highways, tall buildings, and other threats.

Regular square and rectangular garden shapes are most *auspicious* (favorable) because you can easily use the Bagua to identify Life Sectors in such a garden. In an oddly-shaped garden, one of these symbolic Life Sectors may be missing. An oddly-shaped garden can also cause chi to move too quickly or get stuck and stagnate.

See Chapter 5 for more about possible functions and ideal locations for a Feng Shui garden.

Getting a theme going

Many people opt for theme gardens, and if that's your thing, you can create a theme garden that still adheres to Feng Shui principles.

You can choose a theme just because you like it *or* because your garden has certain limitations. For example, if you're living in cramped quarters and still yearn for a Feng Shui garden, we show you how to make the most of your space in Chapter 19, which is all about gardening in small areas.

You can choose your theme based on a certain function you have in mind for your garden. For example, if you want your garden to be a place of rest and relaxation, the Zen garden or the Taoist garden may appeal to you. Or perhaps you want your garden to stock your pantry. In that case, we recommend the kitchen garden or the aromatherapy-herbal garden.

You can also choose your theme based on the Feng Shui principle that inviting living energy into your garden can increase the abundance in your life. See the butterfly garden and the hummingbird garden if you're looking to raise the chi in a wonderfully Feng Shui way.

The following gardens work beautifully with Feng Shui:

- **Aromatherapy-herbal garden:** The smell of orange spices up the workday, while a bit of lavender helps you relax in the evening. Creating a garden that smells delicious and that can season your stew makes a lot of gardeners smile. In Chapter 13, we show you how to get started with an aromatherapy-herbal garden, and we show you how to do it Feng Shui style.

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- ✔ **Hummingbird garden:** Got a thing for these feathered friends? In Chapter 14, we describe what you can do to bring hummingbirds into your garden year after year. We give you planting ideas and offer suggestions for keeping the hummingbirds happy — in a Feng Shui way.
- ✔ **Butterfly garden:** If you're a fancier of these flying beauties, a butterfly garden — which can serve as a new habitat and refuge for endangered butterfly species — is just the ticket. In Chapter 15, we show you which plants butterflies prefer, and we explain how to Feng Shui the butterfly garden.
- ✔ **Zen garden:** Enlightenment, anybody? If you'd like to get in touch with your inner being in the outer world, the calm and peaceful Zen garden may be the perfect choice for you. In Chapter 16, we describe how to create a traditional sand-and-stone garden and we also show how to adapt it to your own needs and interests. Zen gardens can be very Feng Shui.
- ✔ **Taoist garden:** Taoist philosophy says that nature is the greatest artist, and if you're inclined to agree, then a Taoist garden may be what you want. A Taoist garden focuses on the beauty of nature and how you can enhance it. In Chapter 17, we show you how to make a Taoist garden according to the principles of Feng Shui.
- ✔ **Kitchen garden:** Who wouldn't prefer a juicy red tomato ripe from her own garden compared to the pale and tasteless offerings of the supermarket? In Chapter 18, we describe how to create a vegetable patch to feed all your senses (and your tummy as well). We show you how to apply the principles of Feng Shui to the radishes (and the peppers, too!) in order to bring abundance into your life (and your kitchen).
- ✔ **Cramped quarters:** Okay, so cramped quarters may not really be a theme, but it is a special situation. And small-space gardens have a style and personality all their own.

Many would-be gardeners think they can't do much to indulge their green thumbs, because they live in small spaces, rental properties, or other areas where the land available for planting is limited. Well, that's simply not true. You can plant a garden in a pile of pots. It may not be a large garden, but it can be functional and beautiful nonetheless. In Chapter 19, we give you pointers on creating a Feng Shui garden in a limited space — even something as small as a windowsill.

Making sure you have a plan that works for you

Most people are so busy with their lives, jobs, families, and other interests and activities that they're not sure they can keep up with a garden — and if they do make time to grow some flowers or veggies, they're not sure they have time to add Feng Shui to the mix.

Gardening doesn't have to be a time-consuming activity (but it certainly can be if you want it to). When planning and creating your Feng Shui garden, you need to keep in mind your needs, time, money, and interests. If you're short on time and cash, you shouldn't plan for a huge, elaborate garden. Beautiful doesn't equal extravagant.

In Chapter 9, we show how you can plan a garden designed to suit your needs.

Workin' it

Dreaming about your perfect garden is all well and good (and a great way to get motivated), but at some point you have to get down to brass tacks. We've found that the best way to do that is to sketch a layout of your garden and then apply the *Bagua* (the placement map) to figure out what's right and what's wrong. By placing the Bagua over the layout (with the Career sector oriented to the entrance to the garden), you can see which areas of the garden correspond with which Life Sectors. See Chapter 6 for more information on using the Bagua in the garden.

As we mention earlier in this chapter, each of the directions of the Bagua corresponds with a different part of your life (such as Family and Career). These Life Sectors should all be represented in your garden, and you can keep them vigorous and healthy with careful attention. The Five Elements should also be balanced in your garden.

Check out Chapter 6 for details on putting Feng Shui to work in your garden.

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Carrying Out Your Plan

When carrying out your Feng Shui garden plan, you want to raise the chi and keep things in balance. This section discusses the key components of creating a Feng Shui garden full of abundance. We also provide a section at the end to clue you in on how to fix various Feng Shui problems that may crop up along the way.

Picking the right plants

Some plants are more Feng Shui than others. They give off good vibes. Some plants, such as roses, can be more problematic in a Feng Shui garden. You want to choose wisely when picking plants for your garden, making sure that you use Feng Shui-friendly plants whenever possible and using ones that are problematic with caution and care.

Plants with thorns and spikes may create negative or cutting chi, especially if they're planted where the thorns could catch on people's clothing or where the plants may seem subtly threatening to guests (for example, a hanging planter a person must walk under to get from one part of the garden to another). Plants with long, trailing vines can trip people up, so use them with care as well.

Friendlier plants include those with rounded leaves and blooms, especially plants that aren't aggressive in their growth.

You also want to choose color carefully, because some colors are more auspicious in certain locations. Chapter 10 provides the low-down on picking plants for your Feng Shui garden.

Going au naturel

Don't worry; we're not telling you that you have to garden naked. (Although you can if you really want to.) What we mean is that according to the principles of Feng Shui, the natural way is the better way. Whenever possible, use natural materials and methods in your garden.

If you're wondering how to keep the toxic chemicals out of the garden without letting the caterpillars eat all your plants, flip to Chapter 7.

Inviting critters into your garden

Living critters create good vibes in a garden. They raise the chi, generate good living energy (usually), and otherwise make your garden appealing. So go ahead and invite those furry and feathered friends into your garden and treat them right. We show you how in Chapter 11.

In case you've got some critters that are doing more harm than good (the rabbits and squirrels refuse to leave your lettuce alone), we also show you how to discourage them in Chapter 11. Although all living energy is good energy, sometimes too much of a good thing is a bad thing.

Curing Feng Shui problems

Most Feng Shui problems have to do with the chi moving through the environment. Sometimes the energy is negative, such as when sharp angles from structures create cutting chi, or when plants with spikes or thorns are planted too close to places where visitors move about, catching on their clothes. Ugh. Sometimes chi gets stuck and stagnates. (Think of a pile of rotting weeds. Double ugh.) Chi can get stuck in dark corners and in spots where last year's leaves have drifted into a big pile. Sometimes the energy whizzes through the space so fast it doesn't have time to stop and lift your spirits, such as when yards and yards of wide-open prairie make up the garden with nothing to hold the chi in or encourage it to stop and stay awhile.

In any of these scenarios, you need to help the chi out — make the negative chi positive, speed up stagnating chi, and slow down chi that moves too fast.

In Chapter 12, we show you cures for these chi problems — everything from adding some lights to a dark corner to clearing the clutter in the gutters.

Seasoning your garden

A Feng Shui garden looks good throughout the year. Each season brings special surprises. As a Feng Shui gardener, you need to embrace what each season has to offer and make the most of it.



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Even in the depth of winter, evergreens and bushes with bright berries can add color to your garden. You can also add ornaments, such as statues, that draw the eye when the leaves have fallen from the trees.

In Chapter 8, we show you how to keep your garden looking great all year long, and we also give planting suggestions to keep your flowers blooming from April to October.

