

New Nordic Gardens

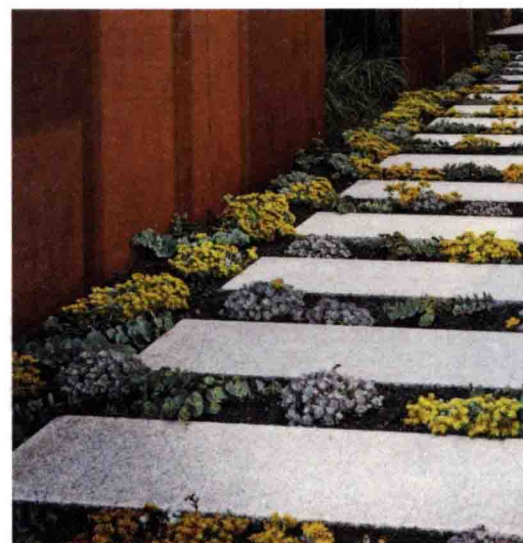
Scandinavian Landscape Design



Thames & Hudson

Annika Zetterman

The Nordic countries are admired for their modern design sophistication, but their contemporary gardens and landscapes are less well known. Against a high-latitude backdrop of deep winters, long summer days and raking light, the Scandinavian countries – each in its distinct manner – have produced particular responses to planting, landscaping and the relationship between home and garden. Featuring the most inspiring examples in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland, this fresh publication brings new ideas for creating modern outdoor spaces no matter where you live.



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With 291 illustrations

Front cover: Plumes of
calamagrostis brachytricha
in a garden in Sealand,
Denmark, by Tidens
Staduer Design.

Back cover (clockwise from
top left): The ornamental
grass *Miscanthus*.

A garden by Østengen &
Bergo Landskapsarkitekter
in Oslo, Norway.

A stone path in a garden by
DesignHaver in Funen,
Denmark.

A garden by Zetterman
Garden Design in Värmdö,
Stockholm.

Sumac trees in a garden in
Oslo, Norway.

Heritage plant *Lilium*
martagon.

p.2: A planting scheme in
a garden in Saltsjö Duvnäs,
Sweden, by Zetterman
Garden Design.

p.7: Ice formations near
Stockholm, Sweden.

p.8: *Rhododendron*
catawbiense 'Lee's
Dark Purple'.

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Take a piece of ice in your hand and find our culture in it;
find it in a stone smoothed by the rapids, or in sand that
waves have shaped...

Tapio Wirkkala, Finnish designer and sculptor (1915-1985)





INTRODUCTION

Scandinavia is a region that is geographically isolated in many respects, and is often sparsely populated and quiet. Its silent gardens have in recent years undergone major transformation, and are now viewed as a great asset. Scandinavians themselves tend to be modest souls with sometimes rustic backgrounds, living in countries that have undergone rapid development in modern times, swiftly becoming advanced and worldly societies. With shared values, democracies and idiosyncrasies we cultivate our heritage as design nations, and are proud of our progress. We love to use raw and bare materials. We marry functionality and sustainability with grace. We embrace all things natural and simple.

Scandinavian design is renowned worldwide, comprising work carried out with a high level of attention to functionality and quality, and based on philosophies of modesty and equality. The term encompasses an entire movement in creative production that emerged from the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) in the mid-twentieth century, a period sometimes referred to as the 'Golden Age', the legacy of which endures in Scandinavia.

Today's generation of skilled designers in Scandinavia look on our design heritage as a strength. The book shows examples of how we are influenced by our past, but also how gardens are now being created that push boundaries and innovate. In recent years garden design has gone beyond the typical perception of pale, tame and neutral, with garden designers sometimes adopting a more daring and resolute – yet still elegant – approach. Each chapter of this book explains one distinct characteristic of Scandinavian design, showing how this characteristic is applied in contemporary garden designs and outdoor compositions. The book showcases a wide range of images of outdoor spaces created by skilled garden designers, landscape architects and architects across Scandinavia. A description accompanies each image, explaining its significance in the context of the chapter.

Furthermore, the book describes fundamental notions of how to make a composition visually interesting, illustrated with examples. In any garden it is vital to get a sense of the space, in order to achieve a pleasing and genuine end result. The space within a garden should be organized in a logical and practical way, enabling it to be useful and readily enjoyed. Gardens that connect with their surroundings, and with art and architecture, can be very successful – but ultimately, design principles are applied to prompt emotion and to stir our feelings.

The characteristics of Scandinavia – how our particular mentality and rural heritage is translated and reflected – can be found in all aspects of a garden. The implementation of hard landscaping is one of the elements where this can be seen. We see beauty in the bare and the exposed, and treat materials with the utmost respect. The definition of sustainability, a word widely used today, has always been fundamental to Scandinavian identity. We had to work hard in a harsh environment, and everything had to be made to last.

From the barren landscapes of Iceland, over the roaring mountains of Norway, into the deepest forests of Finland, on to the sweeping meadows of Sweden, down to the

sandy soils of Denmark – Scandinavia is vast. Weather and climate are therefore discussed broadly and in general terms. In Scandinavia we create gardens in order to communicate with our landscapes, the silent spaces of the north. Nature itself gives rise to incredible artistic expression and there is much that we can learn from it.

With seasonal variation comes opportunity, and the book provides an understanding of how gardens change with the seasons in the north. Parts of Scandinavia experience dramatic weather changes. We constantly work between hope and despair, always in anticipation of what is to come. We experience distinct seasons, with comfortably warm summers and cold, snowy winters, and we celebrate them. By virtue of experiencing so many variations, sometimes in extremes, gardens in Scandinavia are constantly changing, too. Natural light evolves with the seasons, in the north especially, and this is shown in the endless colour changes in a garden. Making use of the seasons as a creative tool, together with fundamental notions of composition, enables Scandinavian gardens to be exciting, aesthetically pleasing and always evoking new feelings.

Soft landscaping and planting is important in gardens, protecting both people and wildlife, giving pleasure and fostering a sense of well-being. Climate and soil determine what grows, however, and the options are very different throughout Scandinavia depending on the particular conditions. However, every garden offers plentiful opportunities to make a useful and inviting space. Ornamental grasses are among the most versatile plants in Scandinavia, and these can be used in many inventive ways, as shown in the book. Cultivating the soil is in our genes – it is what enabled us to survive in our environment. And, taking into account the current trend for leading an active, healthy lifestyle and our passionate views on food, the book also discusses the function of gardens in this context.

Here you will discover that our past informs our future. Our societies are faced with complex environmental challenges, in which the flow of resources needs to be addressed. Roof gardens and greenery are important both to people and the cities they inhabit, not only aesthetically, but also for protection. Equally, the use of reclaimed materials and environmentally friendly approaches in garden design is essential to ensure a sustainable future.

The Scandinavian countries differ from each other in certain respects, but the common way of life, the democratic principles and the sense of community spirit run through them all. The book shows examples of communal gardens, playgrounds filled with vitality and landscapes made for people to socialize, integrate and participate in the space. Put simply, gardens are important to people. Many of us lead hectic lives, surrounded by gadgets and devices intended to make the day more efficient. But living life in the fast lane can lead people to long for escape, to places free from stress. The book shows highly creative examples of spaces laid out for people to enjoy, gardens that motivate and memorable places where the senses can be awakened.

The gardens that we create stay with us for decades to come and should therefore enchant us from the start. They should help us, our wildlife and our wider environment to thrive. They should be designed with dignity, and worked on with modesty and maintained with persistence. This is how we think, how we work, and this is what we are.

Year-round interest

—
Opposite: Careful garden planning enables a striking display all through the year. This *Scabiosa ochroleuca*, in a garden in Vallentuna, Sweden, provides winter elegance with its slender branches and buttons, the interlinking stems supporting one another and creating visual interest. Its cream colour in summer may provide a burst of vitality, but in the enchanting northern light it remains uplifting and optimistic even in the coldest months.

NOTE

The term 'Scandinavia' is generally used when referring to Denmark, Norway and Sweden only, while the term 'Nordic' also includes Finland and Iceland. In this book, however, as is common when discussing architecture and design, 'Scandinavia' refers to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.



SIMPLE

Scandinavian design values and basic principles

Simplicity might be the first word that comes to mind when asked to define Scandinavian design. It underlies a common set of values and beliefs shared across Scandinavia, and makes us think about the essence of what we create, leading to a result that is genuine, pure and modest. However, the term also implies a certain complexity in the treatment of materials, how function marries with sparse detailing, that leads to what we perceive as sophistication – and perfection.

Designed gardens and landscapes are by nature complex; this is how we imbue a space with meaning, character and soul. Consequently simplicity in Scandinavian garden design doesn't equate to achieving quick results, taking short-cuts or merely subtracting clutter. The priority is always careful execution and high-quality results. With this simple expression every element has meaning, adding significance to the design. In the end simplicity is about being direct and working with materials in an honest way; turning every single stone in a dry stone wall to show its best side.

Design in nature

— When strolling around a summer garden in Scandinavia, you may notice free-flowing planting of fruit trees and berries. Hidden beneath foliage like butterfly wings, you might encounter dangling clusters of gooseberries just waiting to be picked, like these in Dalarna, Sweden. Taking a bunch into your palm, you will see nature's own design perfection: the saturation of green, the perfect oval shape and the wonderful texture, like a mesh of delicate stripes or the veins in a hand.

The 'Golden Age' of Scandinavian design

Scandinavian design is renowned all over the world. The term represents a movement of creative production that emerged in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) in the mid-20th century. During this period, sometimes referred to as the 'Golden Age', Scandinavian design was based on philosophies of functionality, modesty and equality, and this legacy has endured in Scandinavia. Numerous outstanding designers and architects now considered icons, such as Arne Jacobsen, Bruno Mathsson, Alvar Aalto, Verner Panton and Hans Wegner, were working at the height of the Scandinavian design era.

The years following the Second World War were filled with optimism, although people were still living in rudimentary circumstances and in a harsh climate. During these tough times it was important

to foster a caring environment, and design efficiency was paramount in achieving this. Construction had to last, and everyday objects were made not only to be functional and delightful and to solve a problem, but also to be affordable to the masses. Although new materials such as plastics – ideally suited to mass production – were introduced at this time, more traditional natural materials such as wood remained central to the Scandinavian ethos, and still are today.

Design inspired by nature

In Scandinavia it is viewed as a privilege to be close to nature, and we have an enormous respect for our surroundings – the forests, lakes, fields and mountains. We are born and raised close to nature, acquiring knowledge of how to treat our surroundings and how to respect and care about the wild. In general nature fascinates Scandinavians, and we have long been

