



THINKING BIG

Hacks for making the most of a small garden

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Small yards on tiny lots can present challenges for homeowners: how to achieve privacy, grow a variety of plants and make spaces feel livable? Portland-based landscape designer Bonnie Bruce of Celilo Gardens relishes fitting homeowners' big dreams for their outdoor spaces into minimal square footage. "Large projects aren't necessarily the 'plum' projects for me," she says. "I enjoy the challenge of designing interesting small, urban gardens."

Since 2010 Bruce has been perfecting several strategies for making small gardens seem larger and more functional. Here are her favorite tips to inspire you into giving your tiny garden a big makeover!

Use a few well-chosen ground materials

Every time you change a ground material, it creates the sense of a room. You may have a deck, and then you step onto some hard-packed gravel, and a green space stretching beyond that. If you're careful about it, the garden feels like three or four spaces rather than just one.

For audio privacy, install a water feature

Moving water masks noise and helps shield your words from your neighbors. Well-designed water elements don't require much space, so you can still enjoy the sound of water and the increased privacy without taking up much real estate. Best of all, a water feature will invite wildlife to your garden year-round.

To create visual privacy, go vertical

Everything from vines to pole beans will grow in a vertical space, and going up helps to screen you from your neighbors. Climbers also give you more

growing space. Planting vertically requires less space than planting horizontally. Vertical elements also create interesting layers in a garden. Layers become critically important in small spaces because they appear to make the garden larger.

Combine art with plants

You want to be able to create areas that give your eyes a pause, a place to rest. Art tucked into a planting bed or hung on a fence can turn an awkward, ill-used space into a featured spot to attract your attention while maintaining a small footprint.