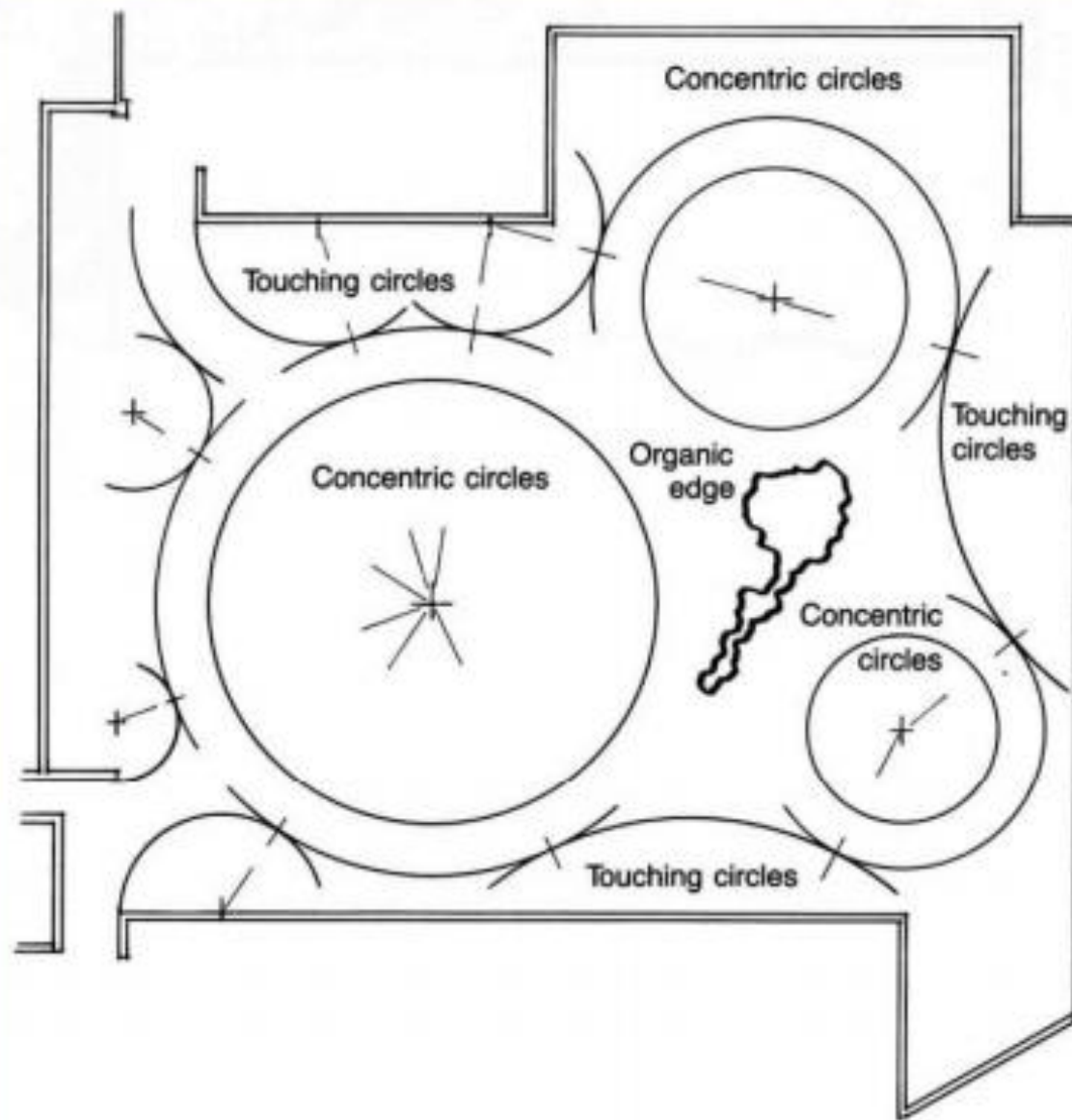




Basic Elements of Landscape Design



From Concept to Form in Landscape Design, 1993, Reid, pg 103



Landscape designers work on a canvas that is distinctly different from other art forms. The “art” is always changing as the plants grow, environmental conditions change, and people use the space. For this reason, landscape designers use a design process that systematically considers all aspects of the land, the environment, the growing plants, and the needs of the user to ensure a visually pleasing, functional, and ecologically healthy design.

Elements of Landscape Design

The elements of composition are the visual qualities that people see and respond to when viewing a space. Visual qualities can illicit many different emotions and feelings, and the more positive those feelings, the more likely people are to enjoy and use a space.

DESIGN



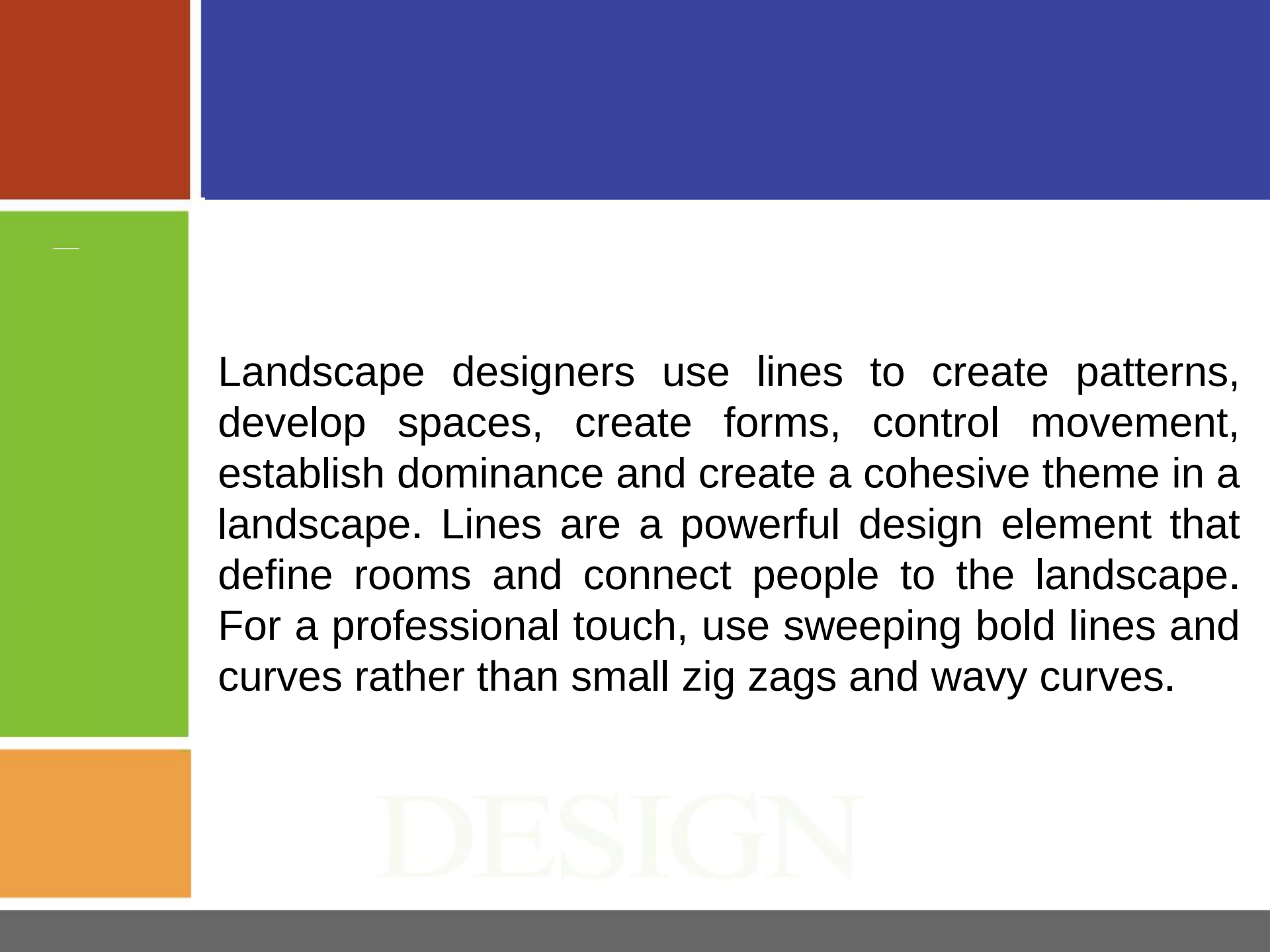
Elements of Design

- **Line** - the outline that creates all forms and patterns in the landscape
- **Form** - the silhouette or shape of a plant or other features in the landscape
- **Texture** - how course or fine a plant or surface feels or looks
- **Color** - design element that adds interest and variety
- **Visual Weight** – the emphasis or force of an individual feature in relation to other features in composition

1.Line

Line creates all forms and patterns can be used in a variety of ways in the landscape. Line in the landscape is created by the edge between two materials, the outline or silhouette of a form or a long linear feature. Lines are a powerful tool for the designer because they can be used to create an infinite variety of shapes and forms; they control movement of the eye and the body.

DESIGN



Landscape designers use lines to create patterns, develop spaces, create forms, control movement, establish dominance and create a cohesive theme in a landscape. Lines are a powerful design element that define rooms and connect people to the landscape. For a professional touch, use sweeping bold lines and curves rather than small zig zags and wavy curves.

DESIGN

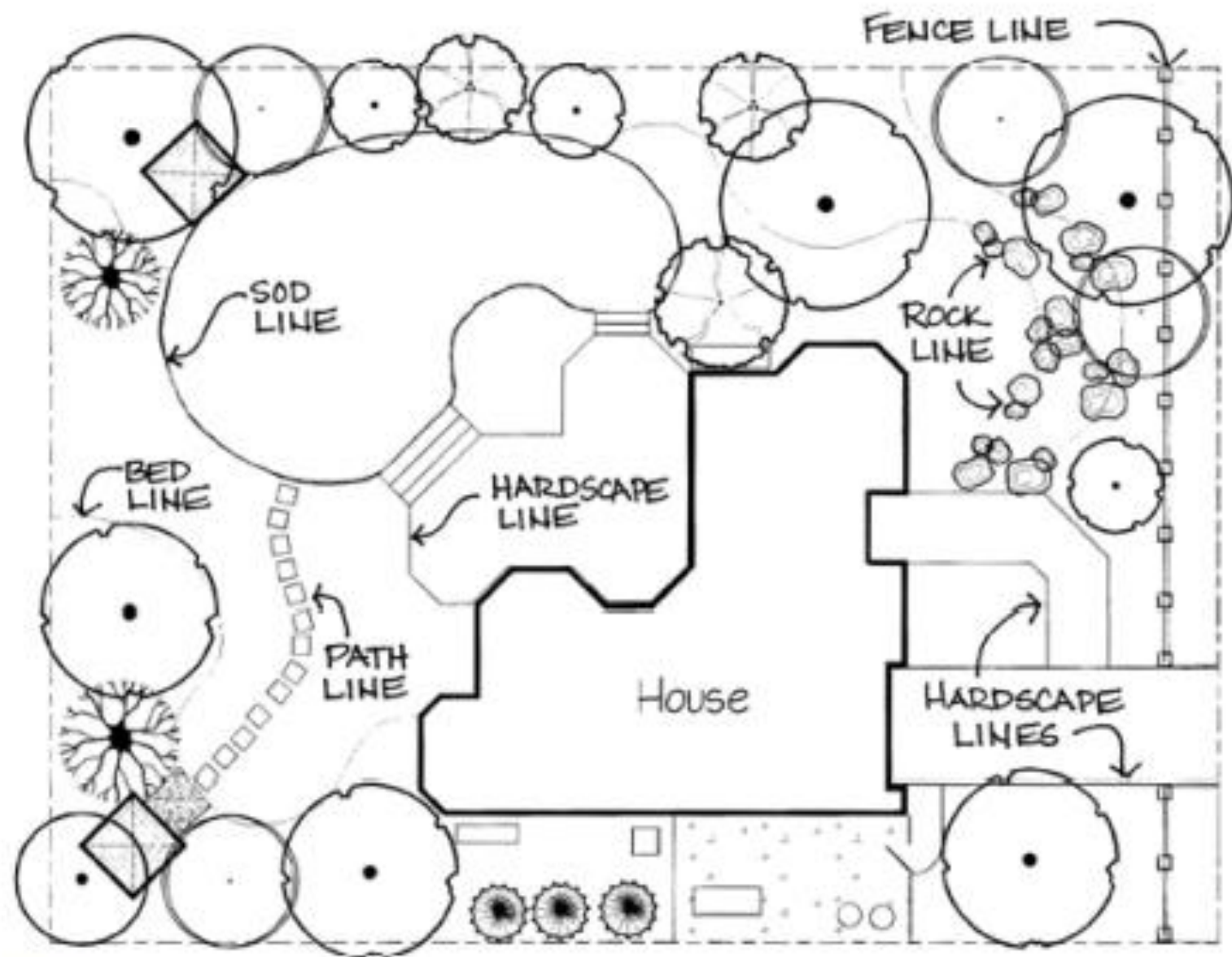


FIGURE 1. Lines in the landscape

Properties of Lines

The properties of lines determine how people respond to the landscape, both emotionally and physically.



Straight lines

Straight lines are structural and forceful; they create a formal character, are usually associated with a symmetrical design, and lead the eye directly to a focal point. Diagonal lines are straight lines with an intentional direction. Straight lines are most often found in hardscape edges and material.



Curved lines

Curved lines create an informal, natural, relaxed character that is associated more with nature and asymmetrical balance. Curved lines move the eye at a slower pace and add mystery to the space by creating hidden views.



Vertical lines

Vertical lines move the eye up, making a space feel larger. An upward line can emphasize a feature and has a feeling of activity or movement. Vertical lines in the landscape include tall, narrow plant material, such as trees, or tall structures, such as an arbor or a bird house on a pole.

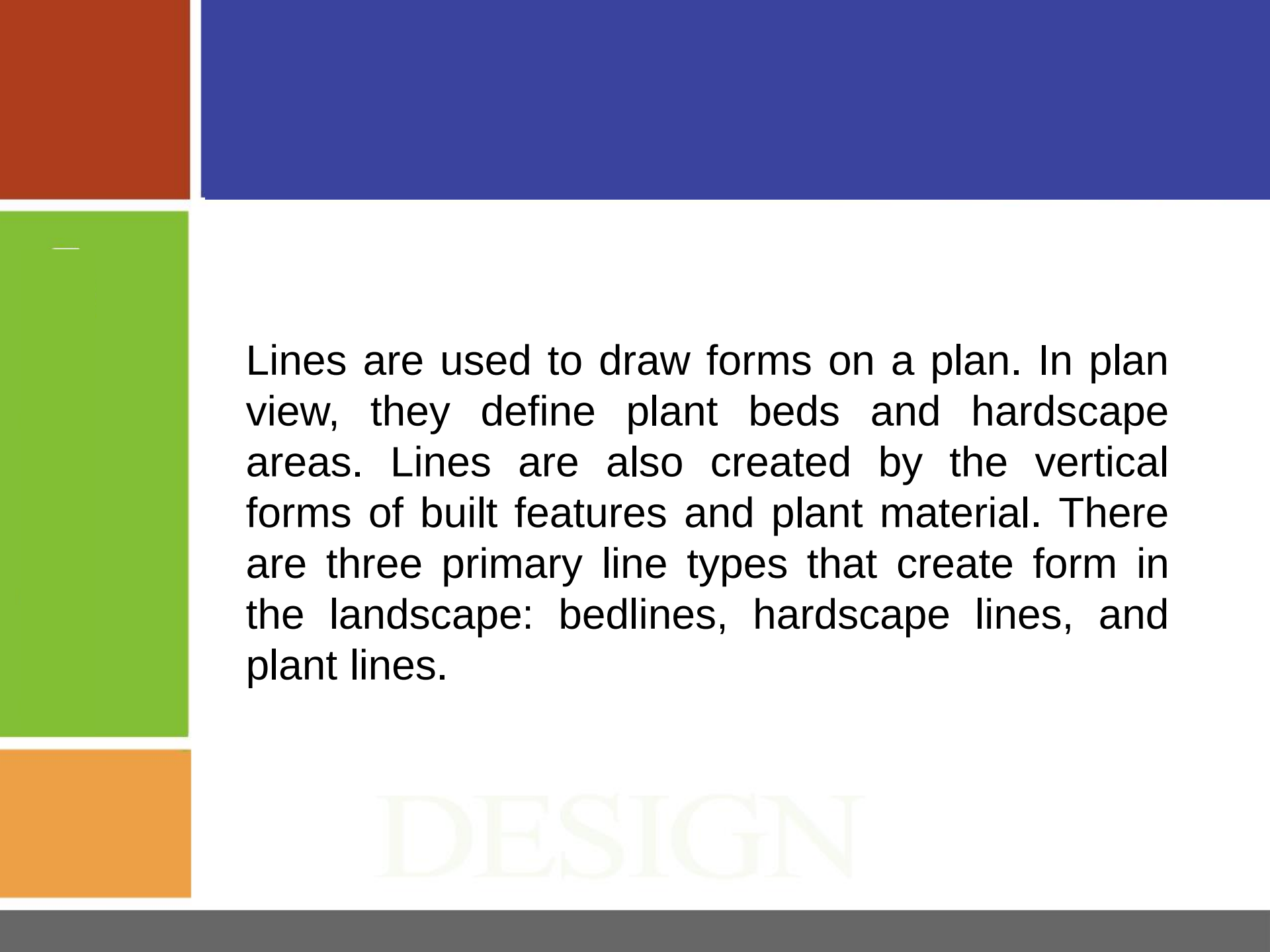


Horizontal lines

Horizontal lines move the eye along the ground plane and can make a space feel larger. Low lines are more subdued and create a feeling of rest or repose. Horizontal lines can spatially divide a space or tie a space together. Low lines are created by low garden walls, walkways, and short hedges.

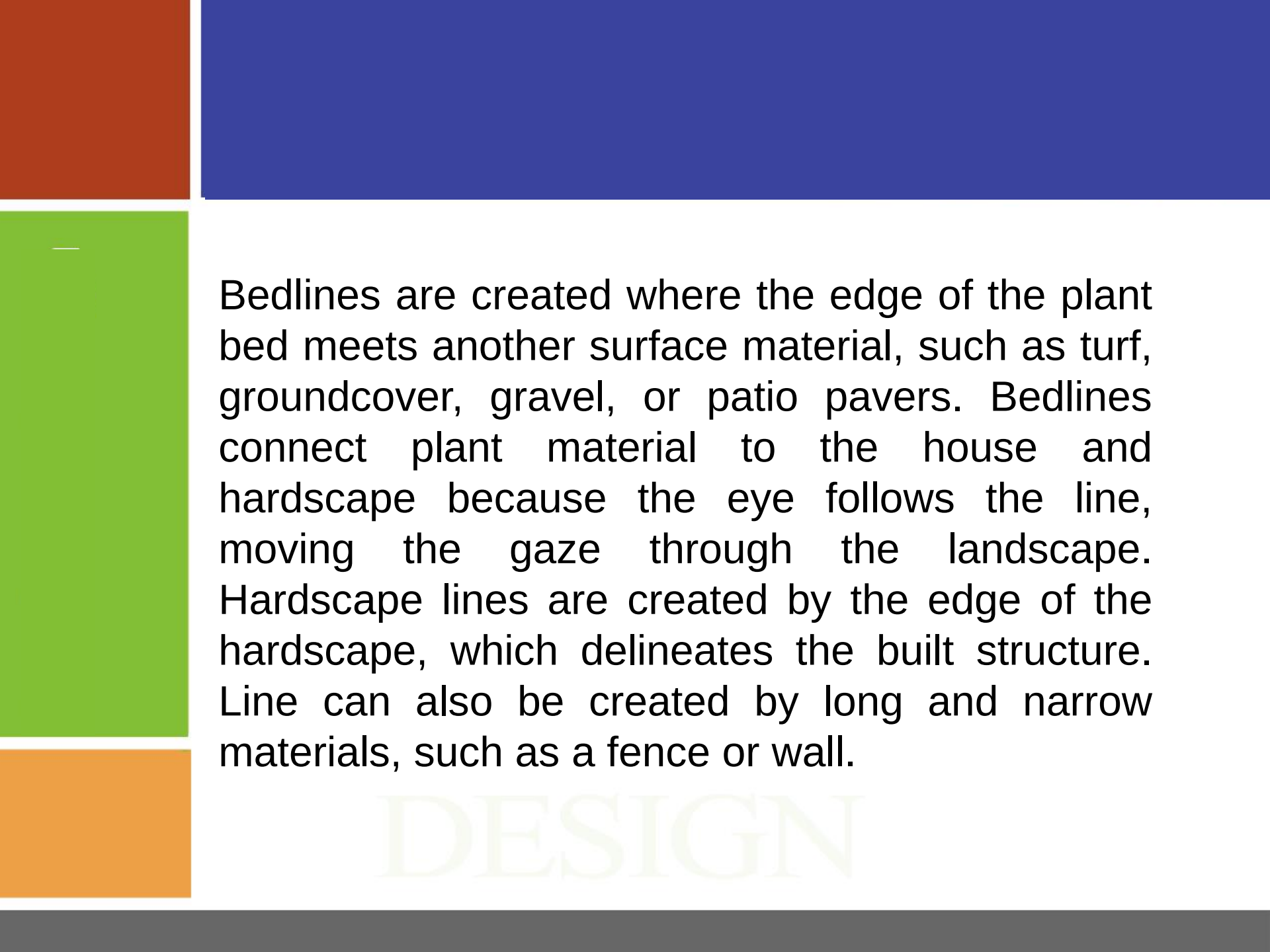


Garden Design, April 2008, pg 53



Lines are used to draw forms on a plan. In plan view, they define plant beds and hardscape areas. Lines are also created by the vertical forms of built features and plant material. There are three primary line types that create form in the landscape: bedlines, hardscape lines, and plant lines.

DESIGN



Bedlines are created where the edge of the plant bed meets another surface material, such as turf, groundcover, gravel, or patio pavers. Bedlines connect plant material to the house and hardscape because the eye follows the line, moving the gaze through the landscape. Hardscape lines are created by the edge of the hardscape, which delineates the built structure. Line can also be created by long and narrow materials, such as a fence or wall.

DESIGN

Plant Bedlines - connect plant material, house and hardscape. Defines spaces.



Landscaping, Better Homes and Gardens, 2002, pg 60



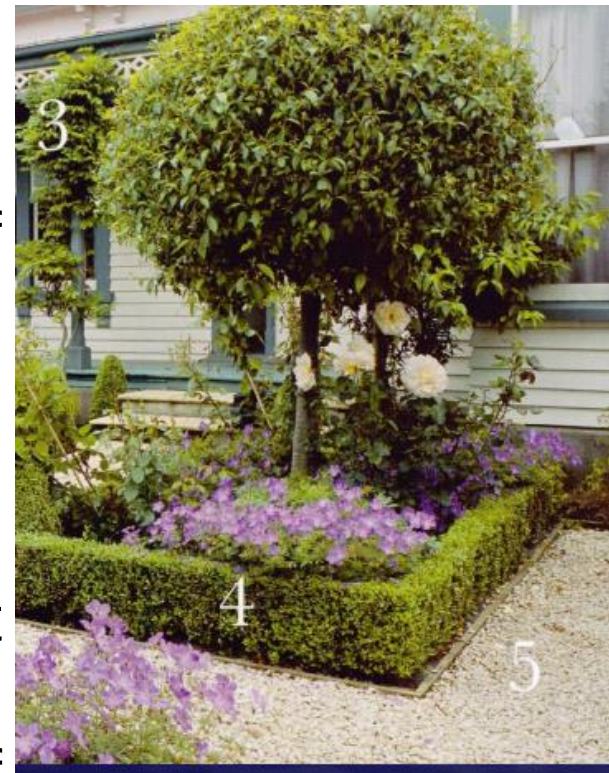
Garden, Deck and Landscape, spring 1993, pg 60

Bedlines delineate the perimeter of a space and create a shape

2. Form

Shape is created by an outline that encloses a space while **form** is the three-dimensional mass of that shape.

Form is found in both hardscape and plants and it is typically the dominant visual element that spatially organizes the landscape and often determines the style of the garden.

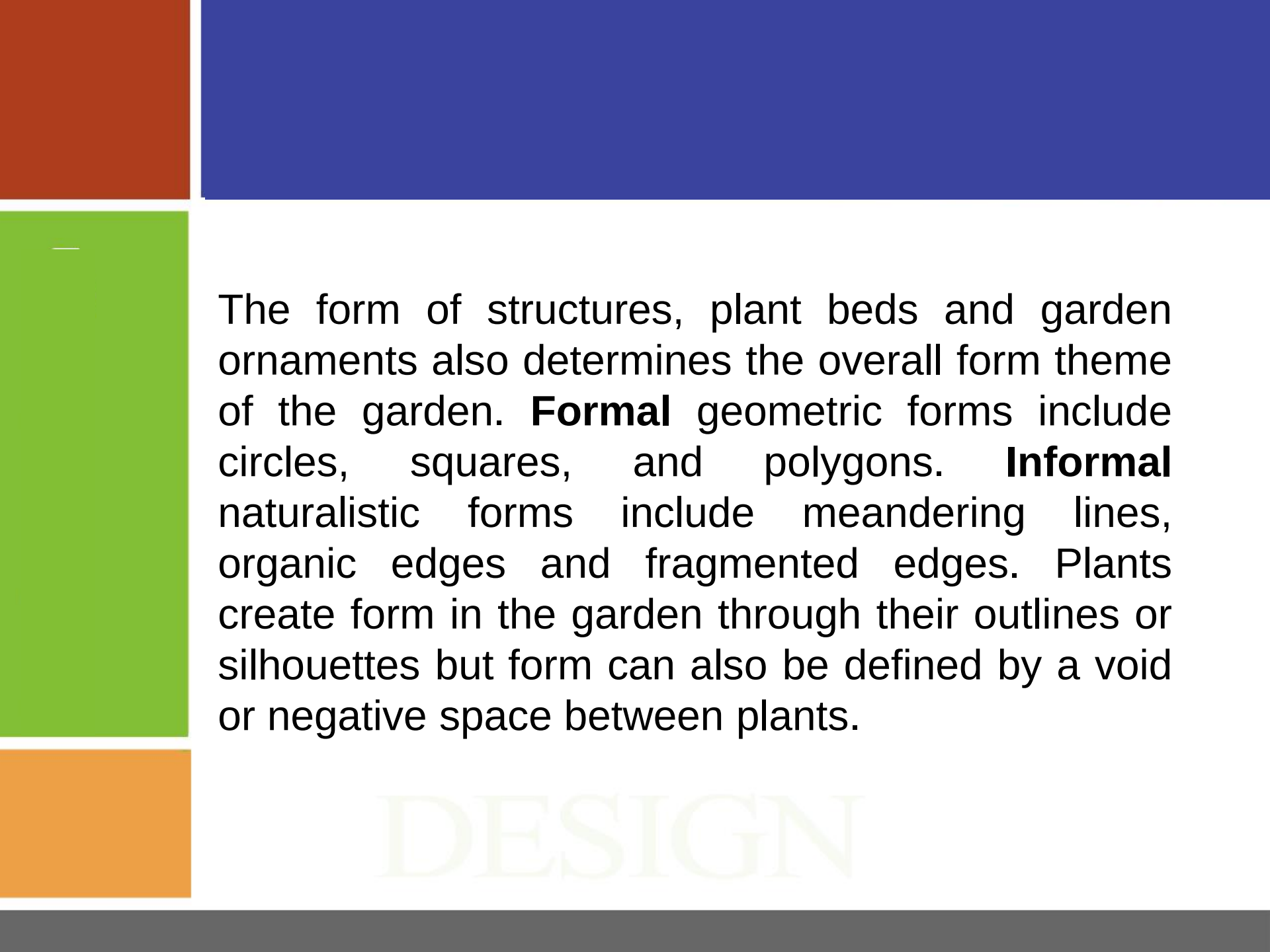


Shape



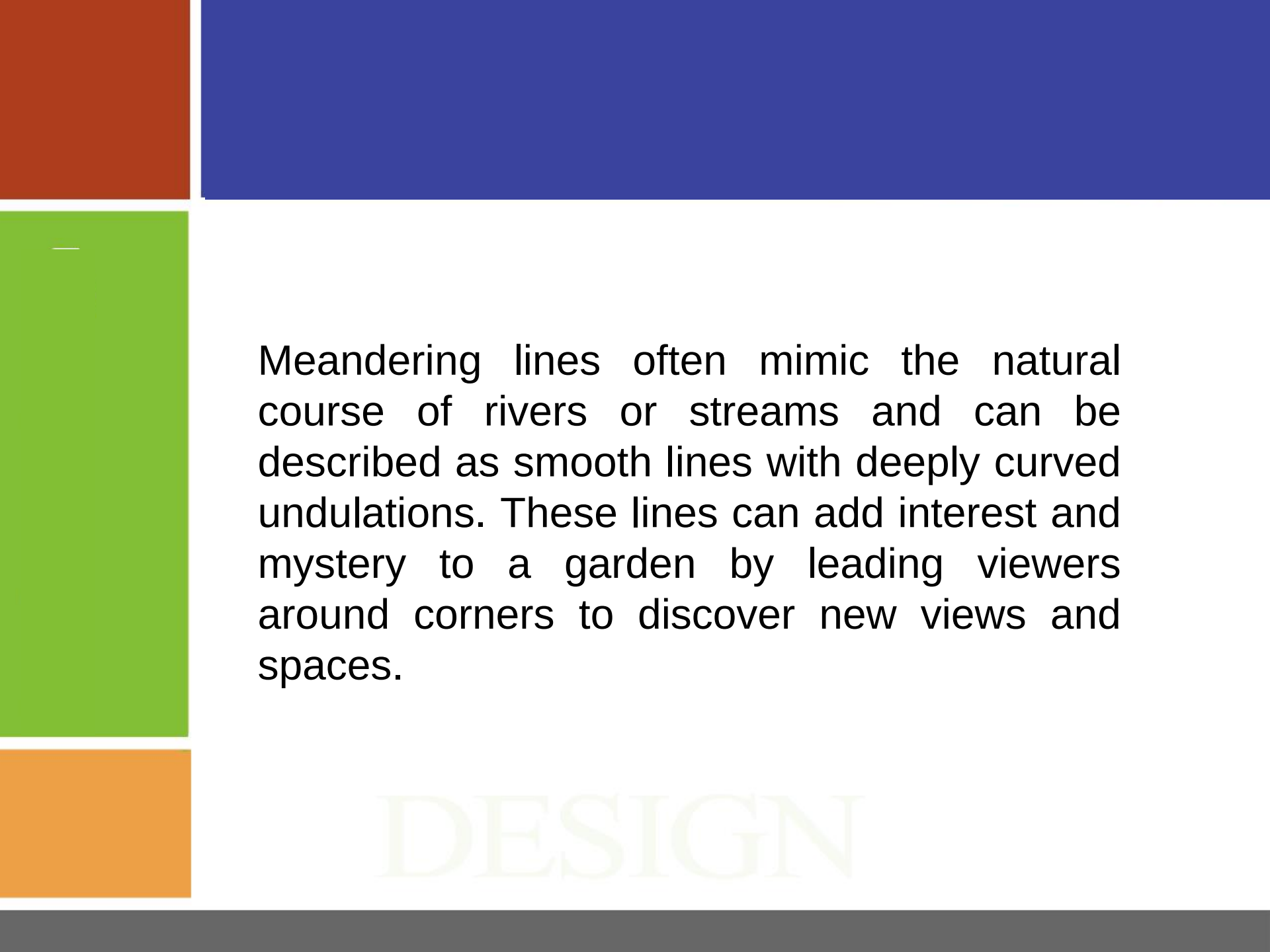
Form





The form of structures, plant beds and garden ornaments also determines the overall form theme of the garden. **Formal** geometric forms include circles, squares, and polygons. **Informal** naturalistic forms include meandering lines, organic edges and fragmented edges. Plants create form in the garden through their outlines or silhouettes but form can also be defined by a void or negative space between plants.

DESIGN



Meandering lines often mimic the natural course of rivers or streams and can be described as smooth lines with deeply curved undulations. These lines can add interest and mystery to a garden by leading viewers around corners to discover new views and spaces.

DESIGN

Geometric Forms

Circular form

Circles can be full circles, or they can be divided into half circles or circle segments and combined with lines to create arcs and tangents. Figure 2 shows the use of circle segments for hardscape and lawn panels. Circles can also be stretched into ovals and ellipses for more variety and interest. Circles are a strong design form because the eye is always drawn to the center, which can be used to emphasize a focal point or connect other forms.

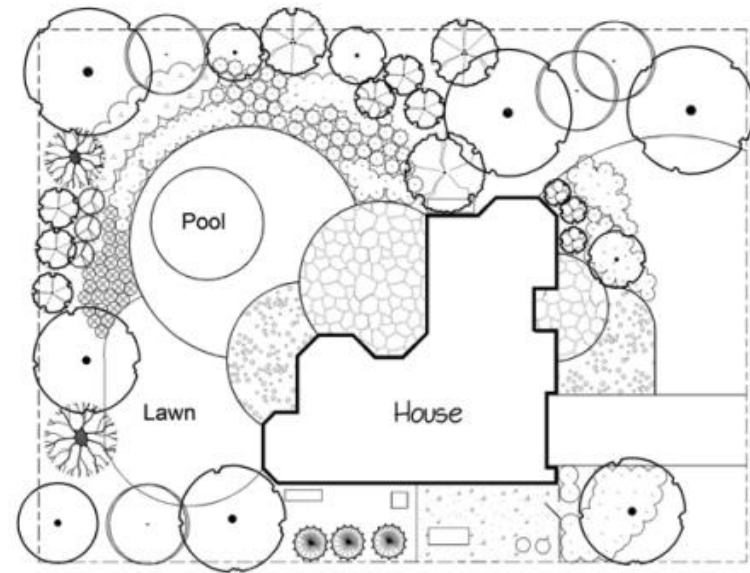
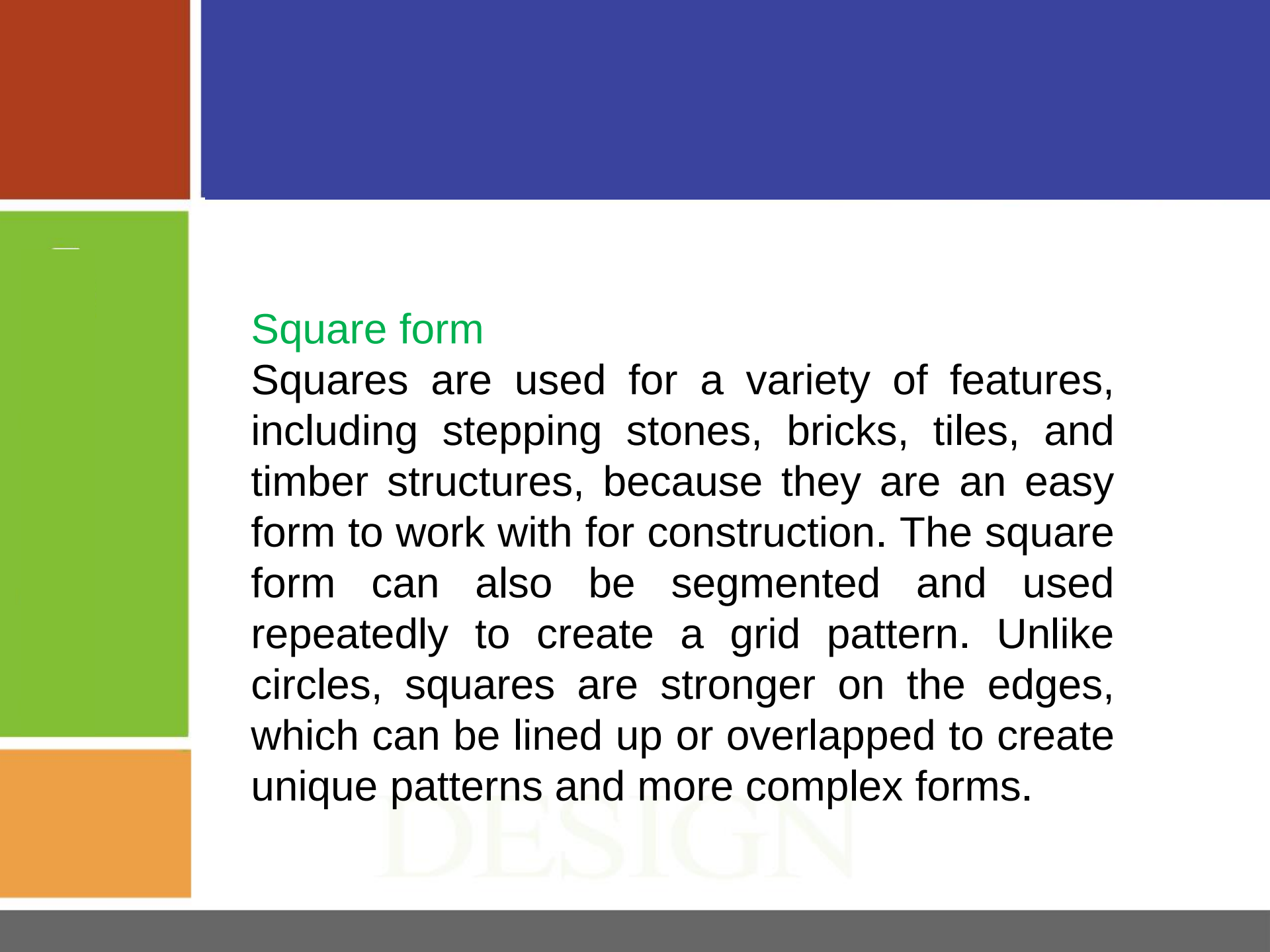


FIGURE 2. Circular forms in hardscape and lawn panels



Square form

Squares are used for a variety of features, including stepping stones, bricks, tiles, and timber structures, because they are an easy form to work with for construction. The square form can also be segmented and used repeatedly to create a grid pattern. Unlike circles, squares are stronger on the edges, which can be lined up or overlapped to create unique patterns and more complex forms.

DESIGN

Irregular polygons

Polygons are many-sided forms with straight edges. Triangles, for example, are three-sided polygons. The angled edges of polygons can make interesting shapes, but they should be used cautiously because the forms can become complex; simplicity is best.

DESIGN

Naturalistic Forms

Meandering lines

Meandering lines often mimic the natural course of rivers or streams and can be described as smooth lines with deeply curved undulations. Meandering lines (Figure 3) work well for pathways, plant bedlines, and dry stream beds. Meandering lines can add interest and mystery to a garden by leading viewers around corners to discover new views and spaces.

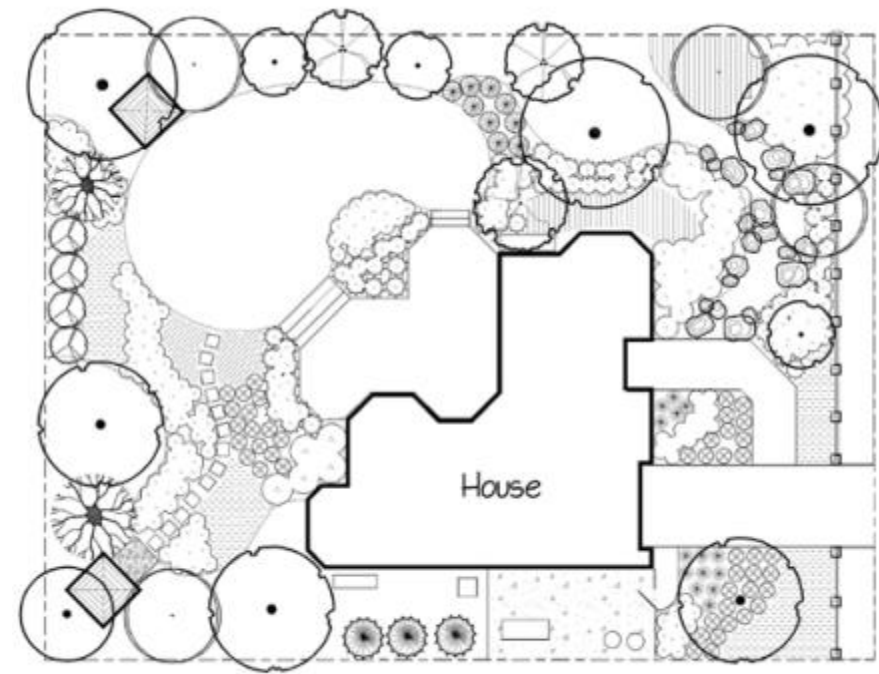


FIGURE 3. Meandering lines in the landscape

Organic edges

Organic edges mimic the edges of natural material, such as foliage, plant forms, and rocks, and can be described as rough and irregular. Organic lines can be found in rock gardens and along dry creek beds or purposely created on hardscape edges.

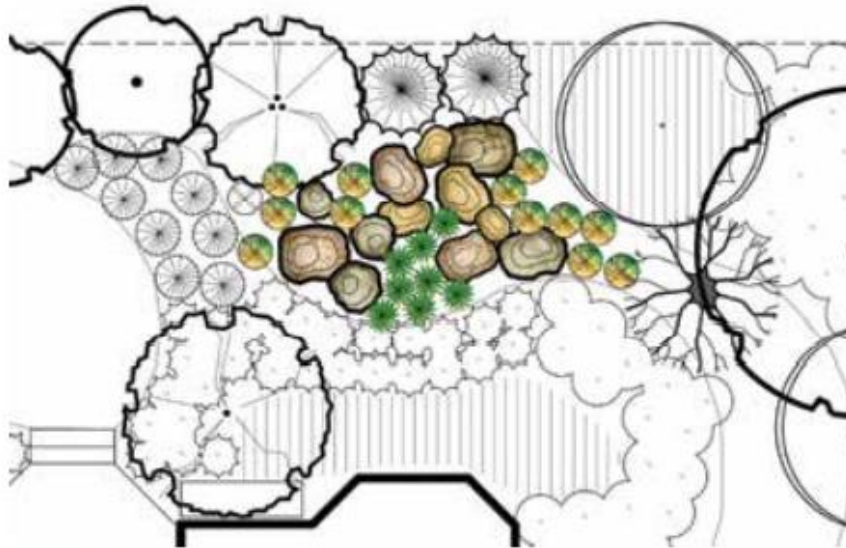


FIGURE 4. Organic edges: irregular edge of rock garden

Fragmented edges

Fragmented edges resemble broken pieces scattered from the edge, such as stones or pavers, and are often used to create a gradually disappearing edge on patios or walkways.

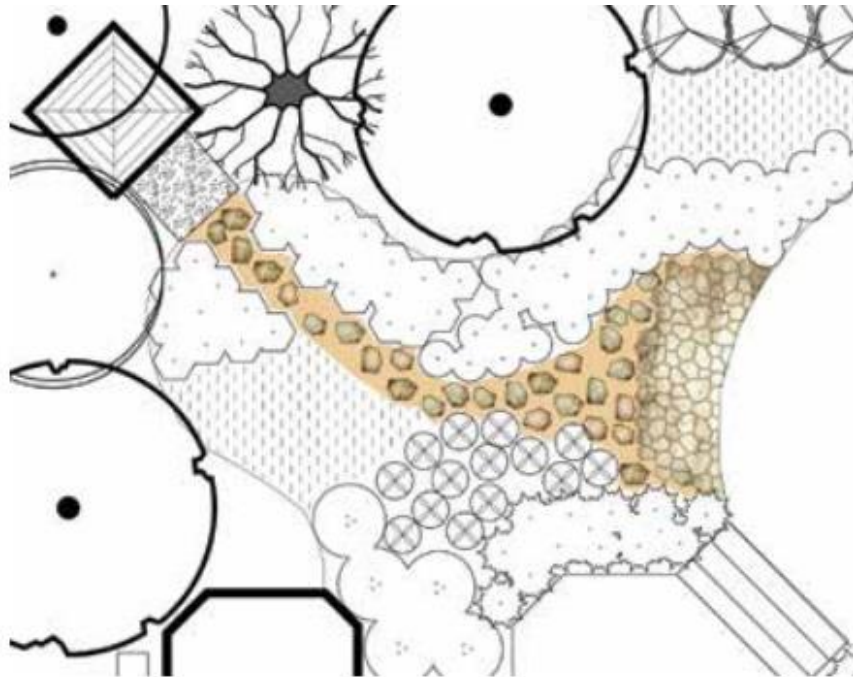


FIGURE 5. Fragmented edges: stepping stones in pathway

3. Texture

Texture can be defined as the relationship among the foliage, twig size and mass of the plants. Close up texture comes from the size and shape of the leaves, the size of twigs, spacing of leaves and twigs, the colours and shading, the gloss or dullness of leaves, etc. At a distance, texture comes from the entire mass effect of plants and the qualities of light and shadows.



Small Garden, 2006, pg 180

Plant Texture - the texture of plants differ with the size of the leaves, twigs, branches and trunk



Garden Design, Feb/Mar, 2005, pg 180

Fine texture compliments and reinforces color and form- lets more prominent features dominate

Rough texture is more dominate



Garden Design, Sept/Oct, 2005, pg 93

Hardscape Texture -

texture of buildings, patios, decks, walls, and water features is related to the type and size of materials



Landscaping, Better Homes and Gardens, 2002, pg 55



Landscaping, Better Homes and Gardens, 2002, pg 78

Texture and Scale - texture affects perception of distance and scale

Fine Gardening, Nov/Dec, pg 41

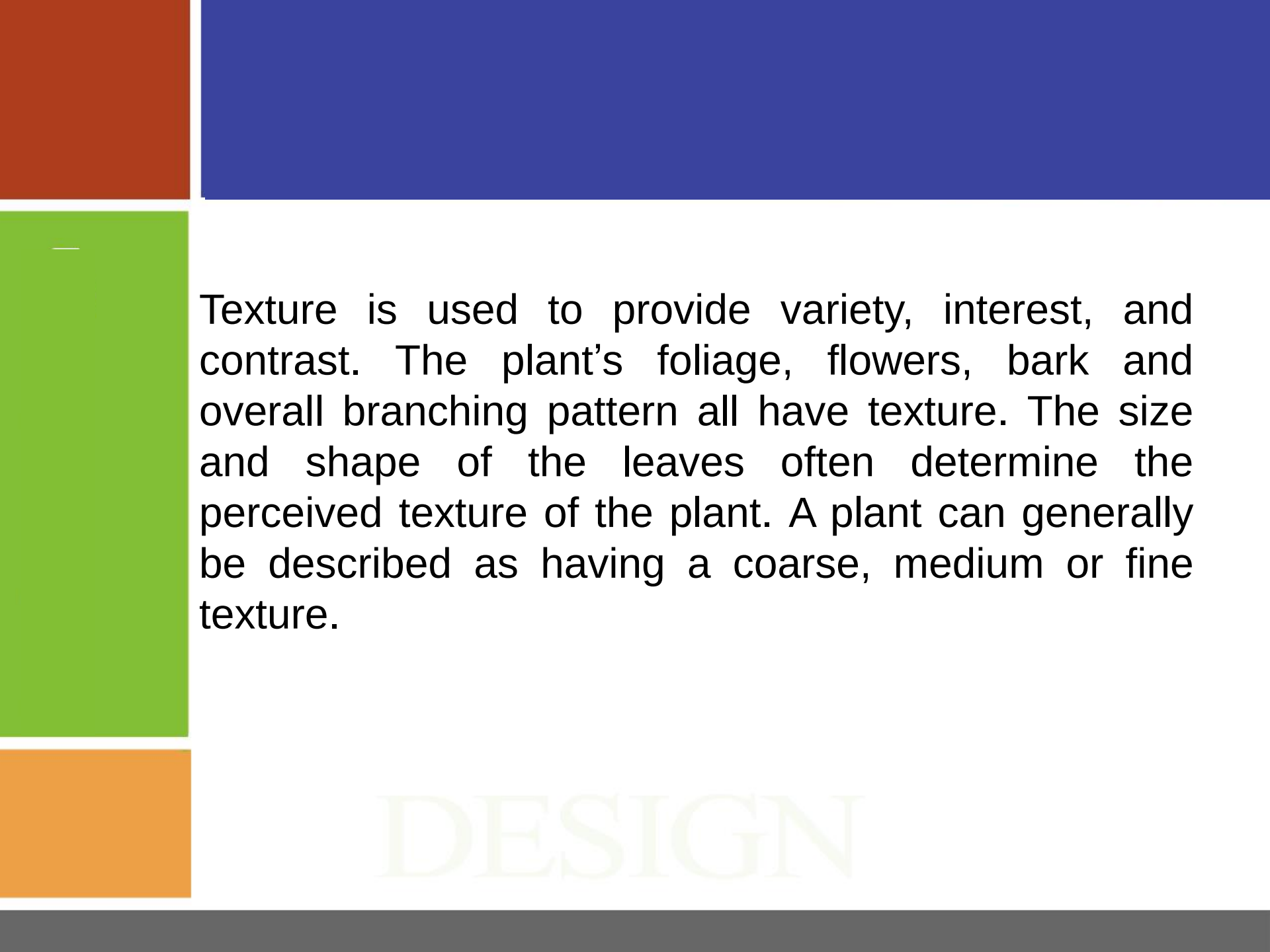


Rough textured plants appear closer- minimizes distances and makes a space feel smaller

Fine texture recedes in the landscape- exaggerates distance and makes a space feel larger

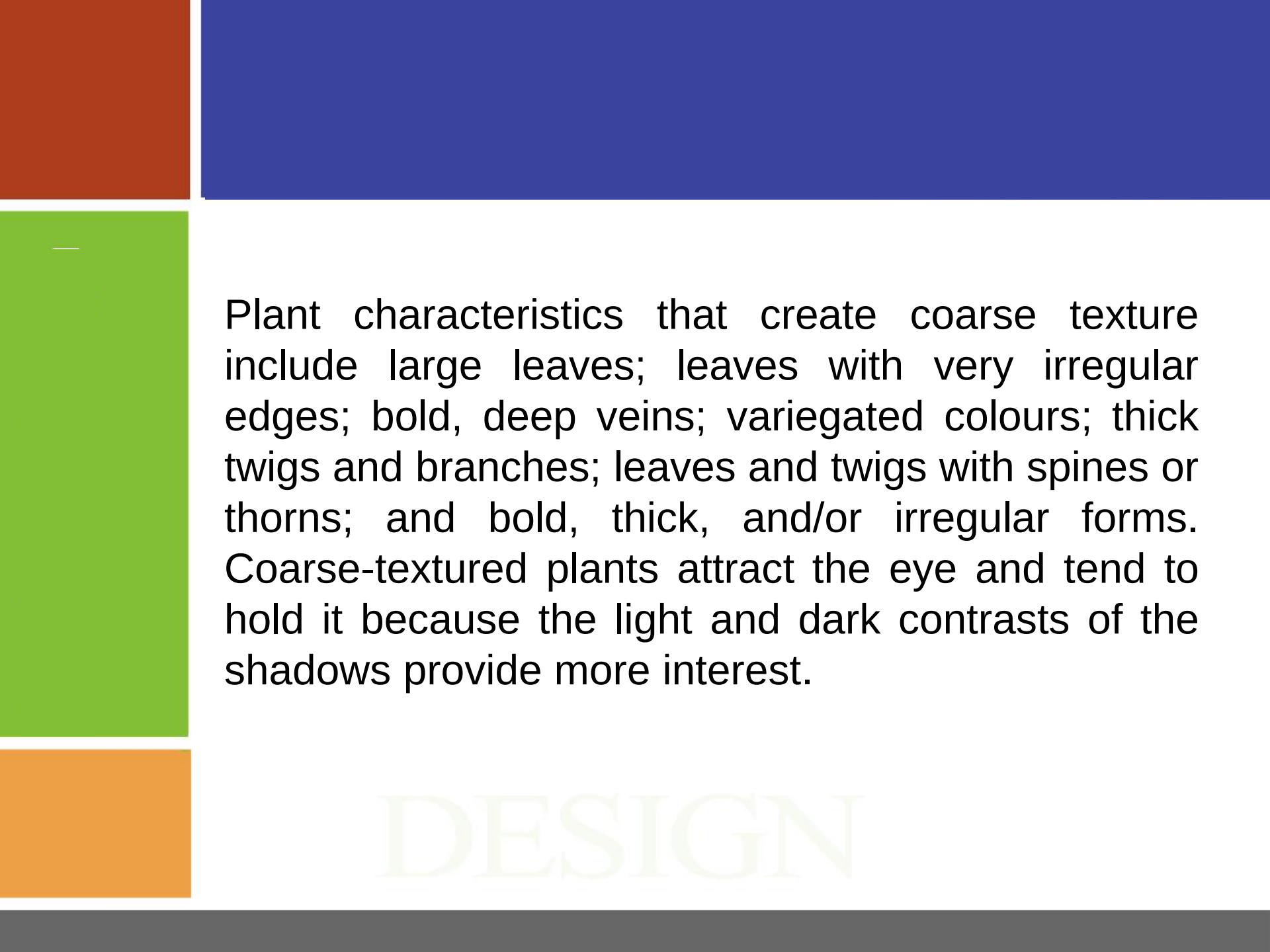


Landscaping, Better Homes and Gardens, 2002, pg 64



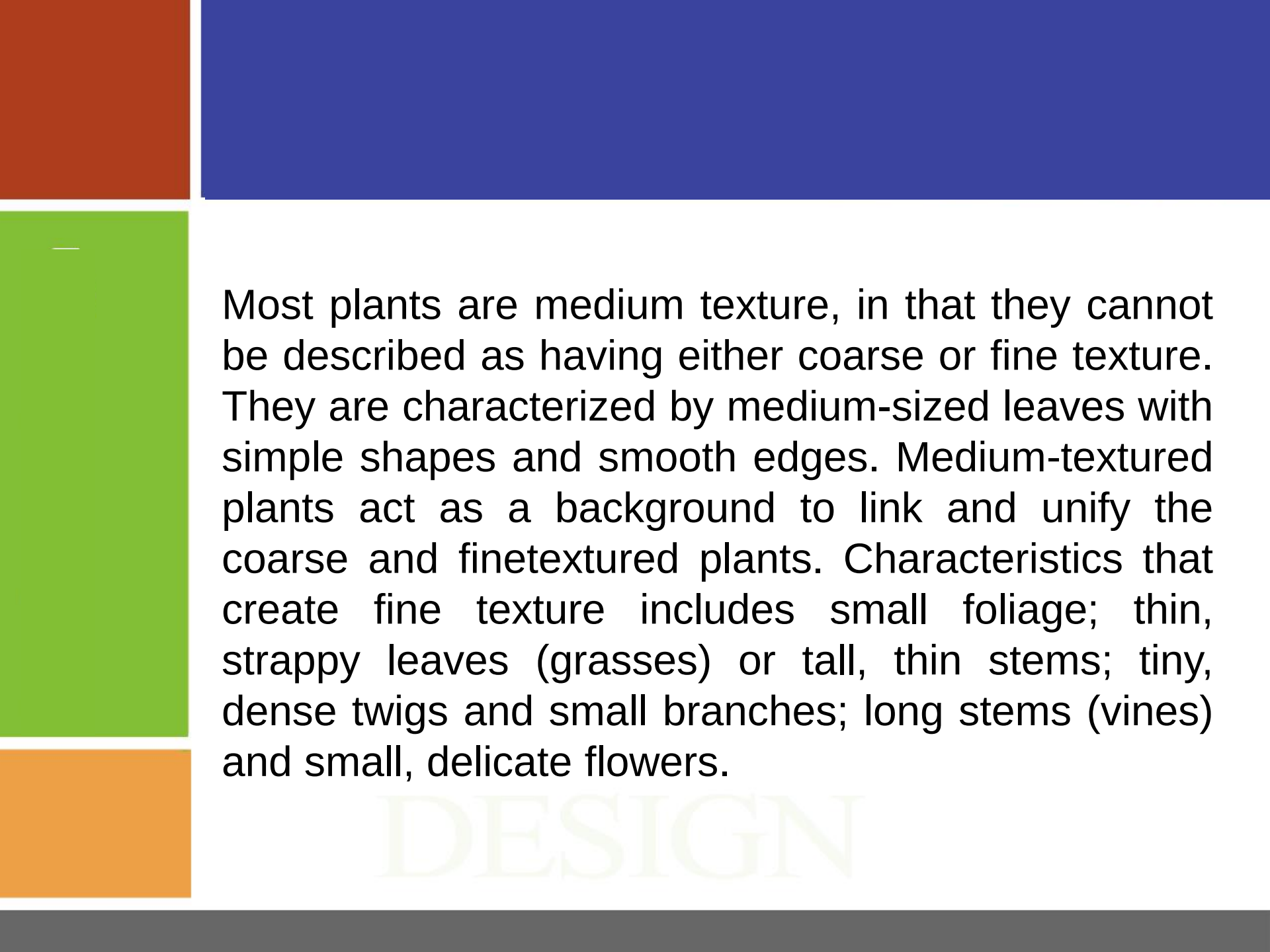
Texture is used to provide variety, interest, and contrast. The plant's foliage, flowers, bark and overall branching pattern all have texture. The size and shape of the leaves often determine the perceived texture of the plant. A plant can generally be described as having a coarse, medium or fine texture.

DESIGN



Plant characteristics that create coarse texture include large leaves; leaves with very irregular edges; bold, deep veins; variegated colours; thick twigs and branches; leaves and twigs with spines or thorns; and bold, thick, and/or irregular forms. Coarse-textured plants attract the eye and tend to hold it because the light and dark contrasts of the shadows provide more interest.

DESIGN



Most plants are medium texture, in that they cannot be described as having either coarse or fine texture. They are characterized by medium-sized leaves with simple shapes and smooth edges. Medium-textured plants act as a background to link and unify the coarse and finetextured plants. Characteristics that create fine texture includes small foliage; thin, strappy leaves (grasses) or tall, thin stems; tiny, dense twigs and small branches; long stems (vines) and small, delicate flowers.

DESIGN

The slide features a decorative border on the left side composed of four colored squares: orange at the top, green in the middle, and orange at the bottom. The top right corner of the slide is a solid blue rectangle.

Fine texture exaggerates distance and gives the feeling of a larger, more open space. Rough texture minimizes distance—plants appear closer and the space feels smaller or enclosed. Texture is also found in the hardscape, including on buildings, patios, walls and walkways.

DESIGN

Texture



DESIGN

4. Colour

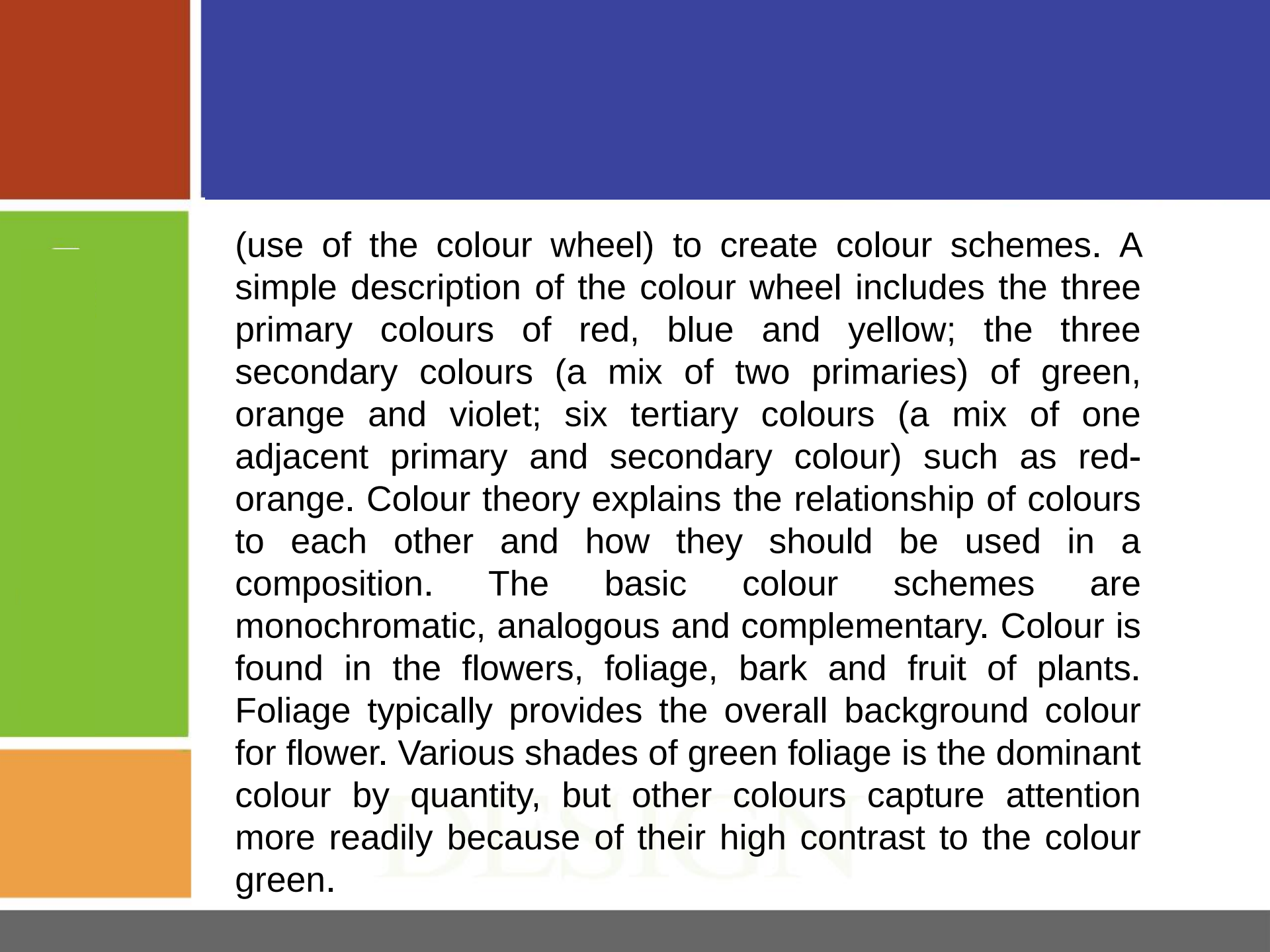
Colour in plant material and hardscape adds interest and variety to the landscape. It is the most conspicuous and temporary element in the landscape, usually lasting only a few weeks to a year for individual plants. The use of colour is guided by colour theory



Color



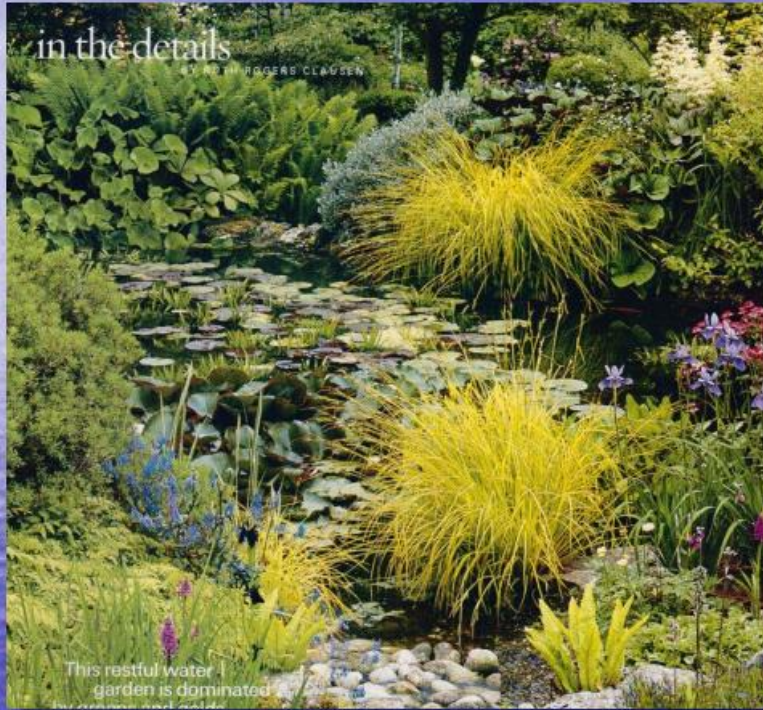
DESIGN



(use of the colour wheel) to create colour schemes. A simple description of the colour wheel includes the three primary colours of red, blue and yellow; the three secondary colours (a mix of two primaries) of green, orange and violet; six tertiary colours (a mix of one adjacent primary and secondary colour) such as red-orange. Colour theory explains the relationship of colours to each other and how they should be used in a composition. The basic colour schemes are monochromatic, analogous and complementary. Colour is found in the flowers, foliage, bark and fruit of plants. Foliage typically provides the overall background colour for flower. Various shades of green foliage is the dominant colour by quantity, but other colours capture attention more readily because of their high contrast to the colour green.

Plant Color - Color is found in flowers, foliage, fruit, and bark, and changes with the seasons

Gardener, spring, 2004, pg 104



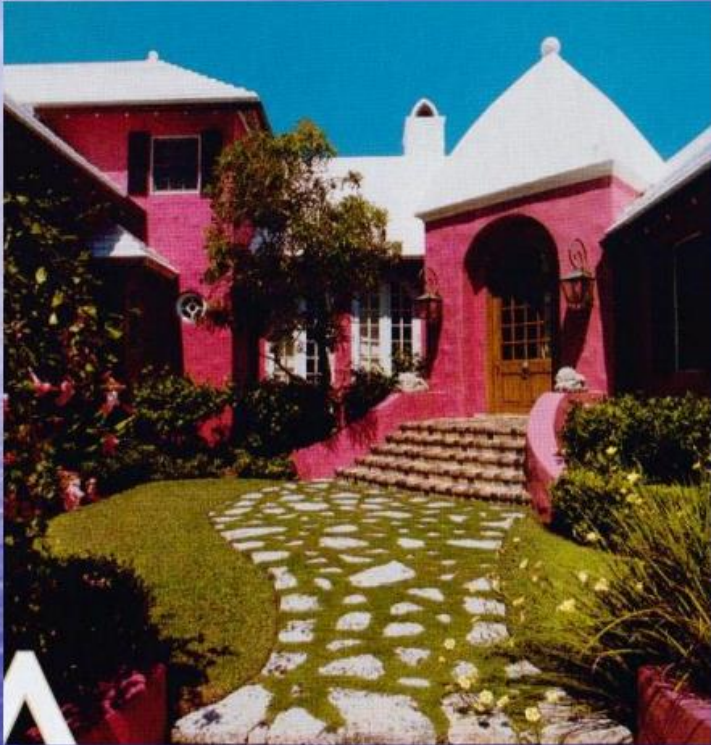
Use color to highlight other characteristics such as form and texture

A small amount of bright color has as much visual impact as a large amount of a dull color



Fine gardening, Nov/Dec, 2007, pg 52

Hardscape Color - Color is found in buildings, stone, rocks, pavers, wood, and furniture



Garden Design, Nov/Dec, 2003, pg 43

Color in hardscape can be the focal point or blend with the landscape



Small Garden, 2006, pg 11



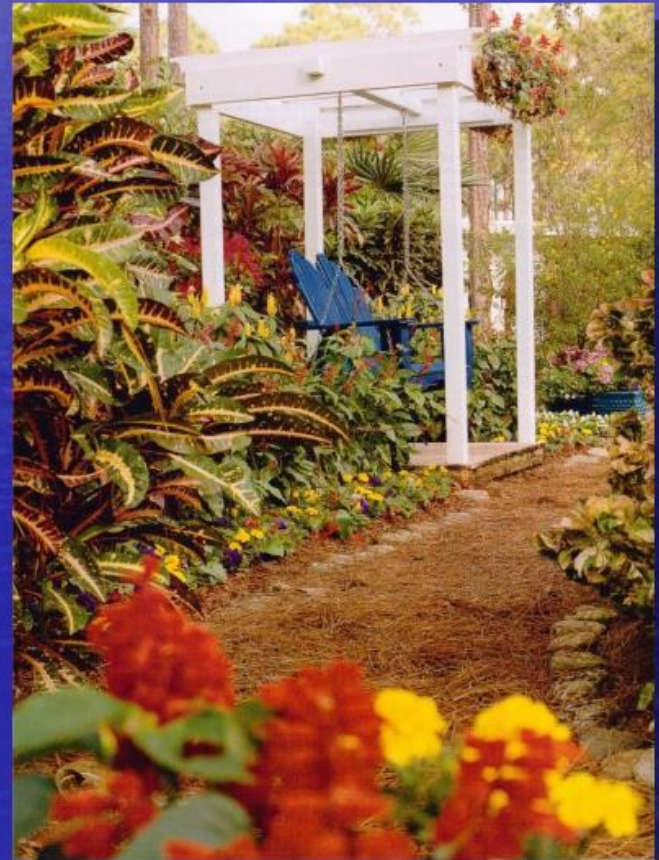
Basic Color Schemes - monochromatic, analogous, and complementary

Landscaping Your Home, Fine Gardening, 2001, pg 98



Cool hues- blue, violet, green-
recede in the landscape and feel
calm and serene

Warm hues- red, orange, yellow-
appear closer and feel lively and
energetic



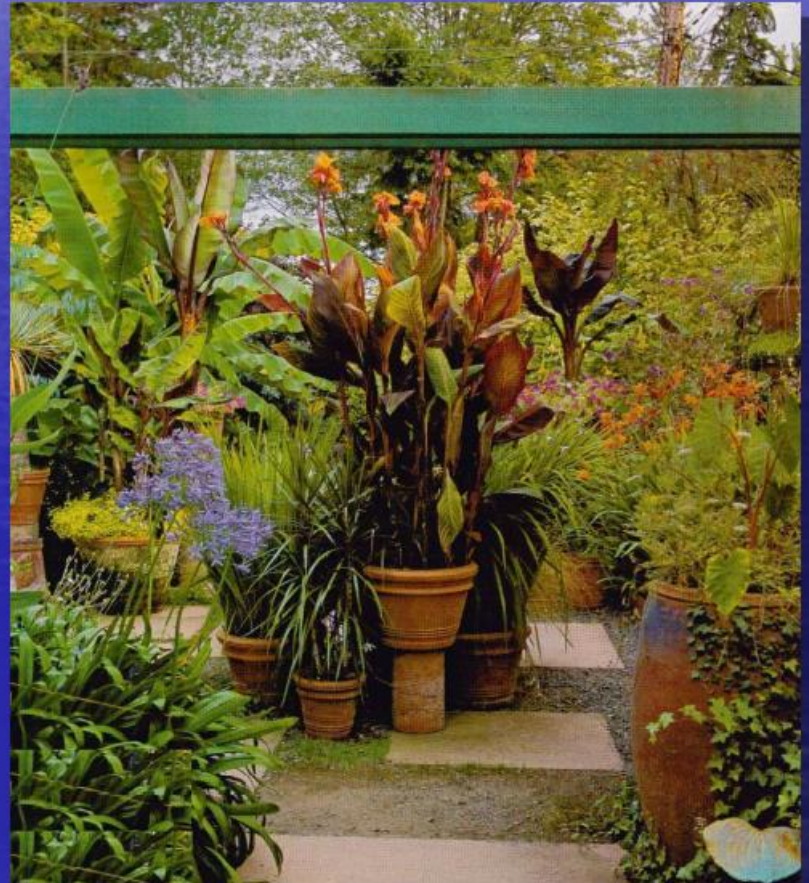
Visual Weight

- The force of expression of each of the elements

Sometimes called visual strength – it is the characteristics of the elements that attracts our attention

Elements can have:

- high visual weight
- low visual weight



High Visual Weight - upright forms, bold textures, bright colors



Garden Design, April, 2008, pg 50

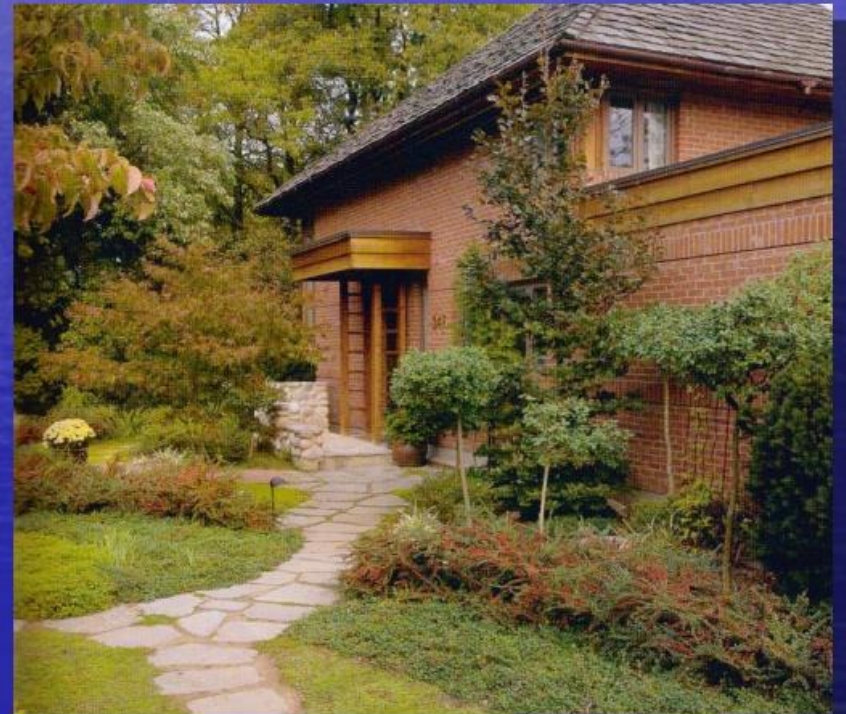


The Tropical Garden, 1997, Warren, pg 75

Low Visual Weight - horizontal lines, prostrate forms, fine texture, dull colors



Landscaping, Better Homes and Gardens, 2002, pg 8



Landscaping Your Home, Fine Gardening, 2001, pg 145

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DESIGN