



Home & Garden

A local focus on real estate, gardening & home improvement



Garden
Muse

By **BARBARA BLOSSOM ASHMUN**
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Home & Garden section

Inspiring gardens on display

The first hellebores that open, white with burgundy speckles, and the earliest snowdrops lift me out of winter's funk into a place of joy.

I never know just what surprises will greet me as I'm pulling away soggy leaves blown around by winter's winds. Today, I find Pulmonaria emerging, green leaves dusted with silver, and the magenta flowers of *Cyclamen coum*.

Soon another big dose of winter cheer will blow in. A series of indoor confections, inspiring model gardens, will be on display at the Yard, Garden and Patio Show (www.ygpshow.com) at the Oregon Convention Center.

I spoke with landscape contractor Donna Burdick (www.djlandscapecontractors.com) and landscape designer Sarah Smith (www.TheGardenSmith.com) who've collaborated on Courting Details, a courtyard show garden with a bow to Valentine's Day.

The two women began meeting in December to design an interesting garden for mid-winter.

"Show visitors don't realize how much planning it takes to figure out the logistics," Smith



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS PELLIGRINO

Be inspired by model gardens on display at the Yard, Garden and Patio Show this February 12-14 at the Oregon Convention Center.

says. "What is it that we can actually build in the time allotted — only two days? What can we do that makes it look like a real garden, but built on a concrete floor, in such an artificial environment?"

With so many limitations, planning everything down to the last detail is essential.

"Everything has to be staged and put on palettes so that the workers at the Convention Center can move it into the space," Burdick says. Boards used to construct walls have to be painted ahead of time, and plants must be forced into early bloom.

But first, Smith and Burdick

decided on a style and theme.

"The feel of the garden is contemporary, with clean lines, but at the same time it will feel warm and inviting. The garden is a courtyard — either an entry or just outside the back door," Smith says.

An affordable garden

Honoring a time when budgets are tight, the garden will show how to use inexpensive and local materials to construct an expensive-looking garden.

"We're using Avison rock (www.avison.com) from Molalla, a big price break over rock from Montana — about half as much," Burdick says. Archi-

tectural glacier slate, a manufactured product that mimics natural slate, also cuts costs significantly. It comes in bigger pieces, and requires less labor to install.

Building a garden on a concrete floor means constructing retaining walls to hide the potted plants — there's no ground to sink pots into.

"The walls will be mostly wood, painted — there's not enough time to build them all out of rock," Smith says. "You can use wood retaining walls in a real garden, or you could get the same feeling with a cast-in-place concrete wall," she adds.

One handsome rock wall, which requires skilled labor, will be built near the entry.

"In a real landscape most people don't have the budget to do 100 to 200 feet of expertly installed rock wall. This will be eight feet right where it will make the impact," Smith says. "We want to educate people that they can have the high end details in smaller spots. Learn how to spend your money wisely."

Finding color in winter

Smith specializes in residential landscape design and consultation in city gardens. After working for Lon Rombough in his Aurora garden (www.bunchgrapes.com), she developed a passion for unusual

fruiting plants. The show garden will feature a Cornelian cherry tree (*Cornus mas*), with small yellow flowers in winter, and cherry-like fruit later on.

"It's usually grown as a small street tree or a shrub and gets 18 to 20 feet tall. The fruit on it is delicious and makes scrumptious jelly," Smith says. She'll serve jelly preserved this summer, as long as her supply holds out, so get to the show early!

Other key plants are winter hazel (*Corylopsis pauciflora*) forced into bloom, low Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), and hellebores.

"One of the big challenges for a winter garden show is that blooms might be really limited. How am I going to get my color so early?" Smith says. She and Burdick scour the nurseries before the show for the finishing touches.

Artist Jen Ellsworth (www.fairyforge.com) is constructing custom art for the show.

"She's using recycled metal to make a big square tower, with a polished refined look, not rusty, and another lower piece, encasing river rock, as a fluid sculpture," Smith says.

Keeping the garden simple is also part of the plan.

"If you put too much into a garden, the details get lost in the clutter. There's a fine line between too austere and over-

done. I think you really need to edit a garden," Smith says.

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Coming events

The Yard, Garden and Patio Show, Feb. 12-14 at the Oregon Convention Center. Display gardens, exhibits and recycled art courtesy of Cracked Pots. Also: educational seminars, container displays, live music, plant sale and demonstrations. For complete information and discounted tickets, contact www.ygpshow.com.