

Outdoor Feng Shui

Terah Kathryn Collins

Why are most people so attracted to beautiful gardens and landscapes? One reason is because they generate a tremendous amount of Chi. They create harmonious rings of vital energy wherever they are, on our streets, homes, and workplaces. They inspire and relax us, even in the midst of a busy day. In Feng Shui, they also support and feed Chi adjustments and enhancements made indoors.

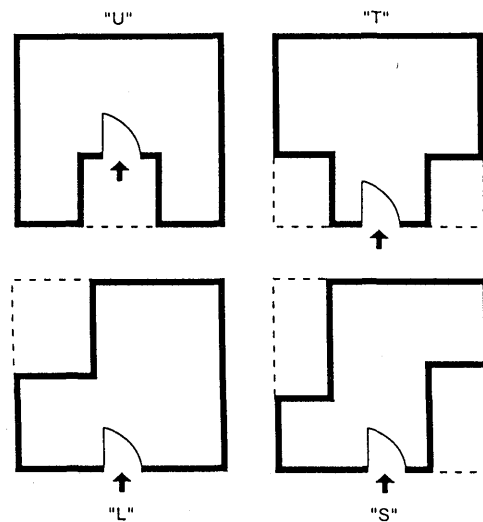


Whether you have a tiny condo, an industrial complex, or a tract home, you can introduce the principles of Feng Shui outdoors. Improvements made to outdoor areas will increase the supply of beneficial Chi that flows into your building and will enhance all aspects of your life.

Here are ways you can apply the dynamic principles of Feng Shui outdoors.

Create Whole Shapes

Many Western structures are built in S, U, T, L, and other shapes that give them architectural interest. In Feng Shui, these structures are viewed as missing one or more pieces. They are not considered whole shapes, such as squares, circles, or rectangles, and therefore, they do not house enough vital Chi to support human health and happiness.



**S, U, T, and
L-Shaped Structures**

If you live or work in a building that is missing a section, your first order of business is to complete its shape in some way. If you do not want to add a new room to fill out the structural shape, you can create an outdoor area that looks and feels like it is a part of the building. To square off and complete the structure's shape, install any pleasing combination of patios, fencing, decks, arbors, porches, specialty gardens, lighting, boulders, statuary, sculptures, or water features.

A client had purchased a building from a business that was having serious marketing and distribution problems as well as financial trouble. Using the Bagua,¹ we discovered the reasons for the lack of success. The areas related to wealth, love, and helpful people were all structurally missing from the building. In addition, there were plants and trees in those areas that were either unhealthy or dead.

Plans were immediately made to improve all three areas. In the wealth area, unhealthy plants were removed and giant Birds of Paradise were planted as guardians and energizers of the new company's wealth and prosperity. A dead tree was removed and a beautiful water feature was installed in the helpful people area to attract new

¹ Please refer to "The Bagua," p. 35.

customers. Outdoor furniture and large pots of red flowers were added to the love area to enhance employee harmony and happiness.

All of these improvements were purposefully introduced to fill in the building's missing areas and enhance the vital Chi for business success and employee happiness. The company is enjoying great success, the employees love to work there, and everyone is prospering.

Homes can also benefit from outdoor Feng Shui. A common house layout is the L-shape. The garage is usually built out toward the street as one leg of the L, with the rest of the house recessed behind it.

This condition is a Feng Shui challenge for three reasons:

The garage is given the most prominent placement and influences the residents to live at a *driving* pace.

The front entrance is recessed, diminishing its importance as the primary *mouth of Chi* and *gate of welcome*.

The L-shape leaves out areas of the Bagua that relate to important aspects of life.



The following is an example of how structural shape can affect people's lives.

For several years, a client and her two daughters had lived in an L-shaped home with the career and knowledge areas missing. There had been a steady decline in the girls' study habits and grades, a situation often found where the knowledge area is missing. Additionally, my client was concerned that, with all her degrees, talents, and daily efforts, she was not getting good results in her business.

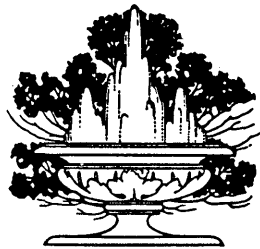
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Together, we planned a patio edged with flowers and hedges for the front that would include a small waterfall flowing toward the house.

We also envisioned outdoor furnishings that would give the girls a comfortable place to sit and study. We then addressed the fact that the helpful people area, so crucial to good business relations, was in her crowded, chaotic garage. She needed to clear out all the old, unused possessions and symbolically make room for friendly, helpful people to enter her life.

Now, after a big garage sale, the installation of a waterfall, and a beautiful patio on its way, she is already experiencing an increase in business, and one of her daughters actually asked if she could go to summer school.

To balance this home, outdoor Feng Shui was a perfect remedy. By filling in the missing areas mentioned above, the *gate of welcome* was drawn out flush with the garage. The missing areas became a beautiful outdoor lounge and Nature sanctuary with its own soothing water feature. These enhancements added tremendous support to this family, and they experienced their lives as being more balanced and fulfilling.



Whether the missing area is in the front, back, or along the sides of a building, do your best to complete the shape in a way you find appealing. When you do, you are inviting a whole new experience of balance and positive energy into your life.

Create an Embrace



Humans are the “Goldilocks”² species, tolerating extremes only for short periods, if at all. A strong, cold wind can be invigorating and a humid, swamp interesting - for a time. Most people are quick to head for home where it is not too hot and not too cold, but ju-u-u-st right.

Ancient Feng Shui practitioners knew how important it was to honor people’s preference for a balance between extremes. They located homes and villages in the *belly of the dragon*, where a nourishing balance of elements existed above the watery flood plains and below the windy mountaintops. In these locations, fed by a steady supply of friendly Chi, people had the best chance of experiencing long, happy, prosperous lives.

These days, it might be easier to think of an auspicious location as having an armchair configuration.³ The seat of the chair represents the building site, while the back and the arms symbolize natural protective features rising in back and around the sides of the property, like mountains, hills, and forests. The front of the property, represented by the foot of the chair, drops down below the building site to a water source, such as a lake, river, stream, or pond. This places the building between the extreme forces of wind and water, in the embrace of natural features, and with a visual command of the front of the property.

Though most homes are not in such auspicious locations, there are many ways to landscape property to create the nurturing embrace of vital Chi. Hardy evergreen hedges and trees, as well as berms and fencing, can be combined to form natural protection as well as privacy in the back and sides of the yard. In the front, install water features - anything from a simple bird bath to an exotic waterfall and pond - to invite the flow of positive Chi toward the house.

**Beautiful views in your yard nurture you with color,
fragrance, and vitality every day.**

² Look at the wealth of Feng Shui insight though nursery-rhyme mythology.

³ Please refer to “Contemporary Architectural Design,” p. 143.

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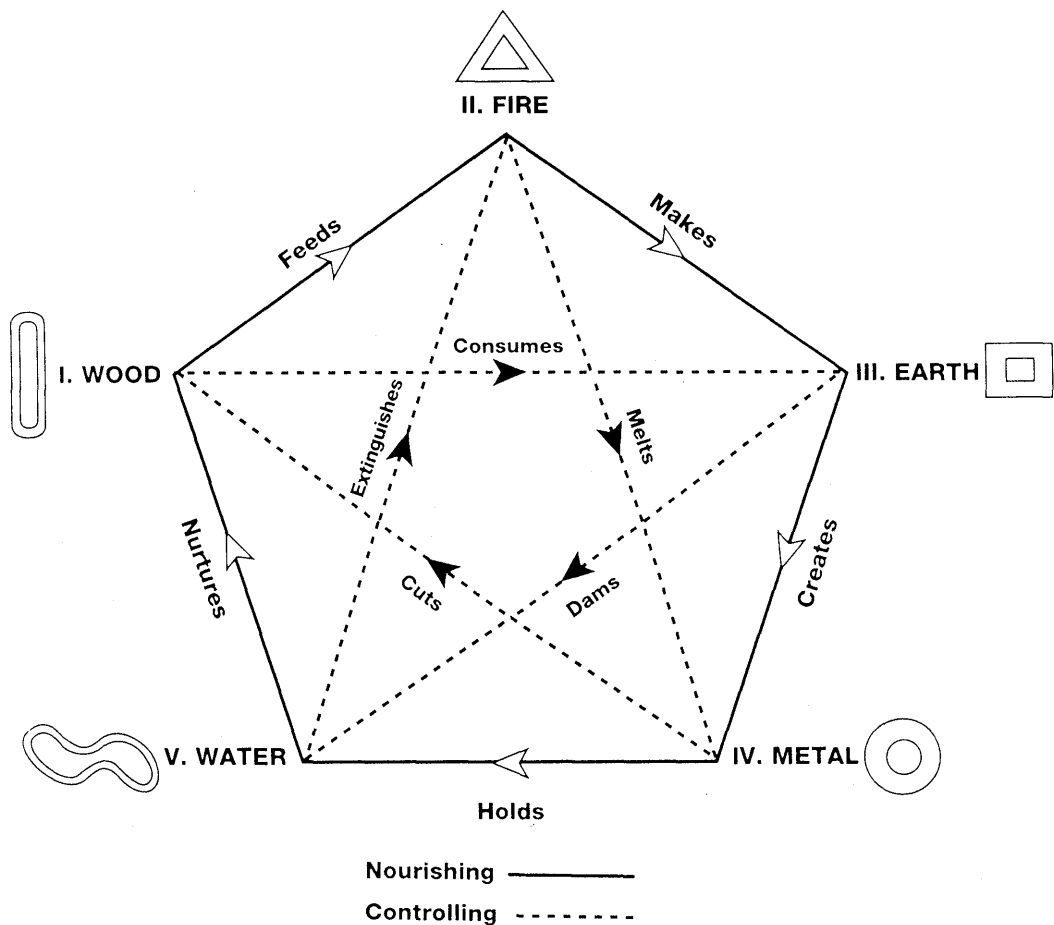
The belly of the dragon, or the seat of an armchair, can be your model for bringing comfort, safety, and beauty to the land that surrounds you. Adapt the model to your liking and your circumstances, and watch for the balancing effects it will have in your life.

Create Elemental Balance

After your building's shape is balanced and the property is embraced in natural beauty, look with an elemental eye at what you have created. Play with the *paints* of the elements, and fine tune your handiwork. All five elements reside within you, and bringing them into your environment can be extraordinarily soothing and nourishing.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

Nourishing and Controlling Relationships



Use the following list⁴ to determine the elemental make-up of an existing garden or one you are planning to create.



The Wood Element

All Plants
Wooden Furniture, Decks, Fencing, and Pathways
Rattan and Wicker
Stripes and Floral Prints
Columnar and Long, Thin Shapes
Blues and Greens



The Fire Element

All Lighting, including Oil, Electrical, and Candles
Fireplaces and Barbeques
Pets and Wildlife
Statuary and Garden Art depicting People and Animals
Triangular and Conical Shapes
Reds

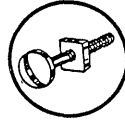


The Earth Element

Brick, Tile, and Adobe
Earthenware Pots and Garden Art
Square and Rectangular Shapes
Yellows and Earthtones



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The Metal Element

Metal Furniture, Fencing, and Statuary
Circular, Oval, and Arched Shapes
White and Pastels



The Water Element

All Water Features
Reflective Surfaces, Such as Glass, Crystal, and Mirrors
Asymmetrical, Free Form Shapes
Black and Dark Tones

Most gardens start with an abundance of the wood element represented by plants and trees. The other four elements often need to be introduced to complete the elemental picture. Gardens made up of green shrubs and trees with wooden decks and furniture are inherently *woody* and benefit from the presence of the other elements.

Many objects, through their shape, texture, material, and color, are a mix of elements: a red wooden chair mixes fire and wood; an earthenware pot of white flowers brings together earth, metal, and wood; a square glass table with a wrought iron base integrates earth, water, and metal. Imagine these three items placed together in an outdoor setting, and you have brought the five elements together.

You can arrange the elements in infinite ways, creating a place of healing and rejuvenation just outside your door.

Think of the many ways you can do this. You can plant red, yellow, white, blue, and dark purple flowers; create a sculpture garden that suggests fire, earth, metal, water, and wood; add lighting, tiles, boulders, water features, and trees. You are the artist, and the land around you is awaiting your personal touch.

Other Possibilities

Landscaping can also help to balance extreme architectural features such as sharp corners, hard surfaces, and the common use of geometric shapes. Western culture builds using straight lines and angles. It is rare to see a round or asymmetrically shaped home or office. To balance the abundance of straight lines and sharp corners, introduce meandering, free form lines with pathways, patios, decks, and walls around which your gardens are planted. The straight lines and the curving lines compliment and balance each other, encouraging a healthy flow of Chi around your property.

Many people are buying homes in new subdivisions. If you are one of these people, you may be bewildered as you stand in your yard looking at the sea of other houses. Look at the bare dirt in front of your house as a blank canvas that will become your garden and landscape masterpiece. Then, start the planning.

Here are outdoor Feng Shui guidelines to begin the process:

When applicable, complete the shape of the house with artful landscaping or room additions.

Plant around the sides and back of the house to create a protective embrace and to assure privacy.

Create a beautiful view from every window and door.

Include a water feature in the front yard design, as well as a path designed to lead people to the front door.

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Privatize the front yard, especially when it is on a busy street, cul-de-sac, or T-junction.

Bring the five elements into the landscape design.

When applicable, install gates in side yard fences to circulate Chi all the way around the house.

When the building is comprised of straight lines and angles, choose meandering lines for pathways, patios, and garden walls.

Outdoor junk stagnates vital Chi. Keep Chi healthy and flowing by selling, throwing, or giving away discarded or unused items.

Enjoy creating your own Personal Paradise. It will make life more magnificent for you, as well as for all the people fortunate enough to live or work nearby.⁵



⁵

This is an excerpt taken from Terah's next book, The Advanced Western Guide to Feng Shui, available in summer 1997. All rights reserved, copyright, 1996.

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