



It's not just the way the words in the stories roll off our tongues, or the fun represented in the exuberant colors of the illustrations that bring a smile to our faces. Dr. Seuss left this world an appreciation for the surreal, an enjoyment of odd representations, and bold statements on social matters. We should be so lucky to speak with such a creative voice in our landscapes. If you want to give it a go - be bold, be daring, think like there isn't a box. Let's get you started in "Seussifying" the landscape. This can be achieved through topiary, which is basically creative pruning and shearing. Using plant materials that respond well to frequent or intense shaping make this a fun and enjoyable garden task. Or, try starting with unusual plant choices that come pre-funked – then all you have to do is plant, care for, and love them into maturity.

Topiaries look harder than they need to be. It does take time and forethought to achieve the end shape but a few tools and the proper plants make the task moderately easy. Hedging is a simple form of topiary and will get you comfortable with the process of shearing plants material. Think tall for traditional walls of green. Add an edge of scallops at the top or put windows and doors into the body of the hedge to add some interest and fun. From there you can add other architectural forms to frame a view, highlight an important specimen, or enhance the appearance of sculpture, an entrance or walkway.

If you have an opportunity to grow low to the ground, knot gardens can be a great way to a sinuous quality to the landscape. They don't have to be in straight lines you know. And think about rounded tops to simulate the shape of a snake. Carve out designs or words along the top. Pleaching is a deciduous topiary technique found mainly in Europe. The two separate focal points of this are the bare trunks topped with a strongly hedged, and flat plane of tightly sheared leaf mass - very intensive in training and maintenance.

Often used in eastern cultures, cloud pruning consists of removing all vegetation from the branches, leaving only the very end foliage and structure for shaping. This gives, as the name suggests, a cloud-like appearance to the plant. Arborsculpture takes all of these topiary techniques and then adds branch and trunk grafting, and bending to achieve living structures – chairs, arbors, fences, and the like. For any of these try *Buxus* (boxwood), *Taxus* (yew), *Ilex* (holly), or *Carpinus betulus* (hophornbeam).

If the hand's on shearing techniques are not your thing, look at some plant materials that will naturally add unusual interest in color, form, and texture. If you want large and funky, there are always foliage and flower choices in annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees to add pop during the growing season. Just be sure to start them early enough in the season to get the

most out of any annuals throughout the growing season. And remember to bring any annual bulbs in before they freeze for successful winter/dormant season storage.

- *Amaranthus hypochondriacus* (prince's feather) - fun annual, about six feet tall with outrageously sized, upright, red flowers
- *Colocasia* 'Black Magic' - five to six feet tall, intense purplish coloring, outlandish shape
- Dahlias (dinner plate type) - the epitome of overstated flowers, hugely intense color and height presentation
- *Eryngium giganteum* (Miss Wilmott's Ghost) - a surprise plant, silvery colored rough and tough spikey flowers
- *Hosta* 'Blue Angel' - very large, bluish green foliage reaching about four feet in height
- *Hosta* 'Mouse Ears' - a very interesting and tiny six inch plant with thickly curled leaves
- *Monarda punctata* 'Fantasy' (bee balm) - unusually stacked blooms of lavender, spotted yellow, and green
- *Senecio* 'Kilimanjaro' - interesting plant - looks like a succulent, light colored evergreen branch on steroids
- *Xanthosoma violaceum* var. *maffaffa* 'Lime Zinger' or 'Chartreuse Giant' brightly colored greens, positively huge leaf structure

For tree and shrub surrealism, go take a look at the interesting beauties available out in the nurseries. Some of those that are the most fun give to the landscape in one way or another during all of the seasons.

- *Acer palmatum* 'Fairyhair' - small and columnar with wispy, hair-like foliage
- *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea* 'Helmond Pillar' – upright, purple, spikey
- *Caragana arborescens* 'Pendula', 'Walker', or 'Lorbergii' – good weeping habit, degree varies
- *Carpinus betulus* 'Vienna Weeping' - gloriously full cap-like form
- *Chamaecyparis* 'Green Arrow' - up, up and away to the heavens
- *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' – excellent choice
- *Larix decidua* 'Horstman's Recurved' - twisty, curvy, weepy
- *Rhus typhina* 'Tiger Eyes' - unusual brightness
- *Stephanandra incisa* 'Crispa' – small, natural, mound-like outline
- *Styphnolobium japonicum* 'Pendula' - pronounced, twisted horizontal weep
- *Taxodium distichum* 'Peve Yellow' - what a yellow
- *Thuja plicata* 'Whipcord' - looks like Cousin It
- *Tsuga canadensis* 'Cole's Prostrate' - low, slow crawler
- *Tsuga canadensis* 'Moon Frost' - white frosted foliage in spring coloring to a pinkish hue during the winter