

Yard Art: Mona Lisa is Hiding in Your Yard

By Julie Silva

Art, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Art in your yard should be unique, endearing and personal. Yard art may be small and focused or large and encompassing, but it should be a part of you and your family.

For years outdoor activities were centered around driveway sports or a pool. Now the “outdoors” exists as an extension of the home with couches, televisions, kitchens, and family time. Decorating out of doors is like decorating indoors, using things that are interesting, meaningful and pleasant to the eye.

Children need a place in the yard for their own art. Let them display recycled furniture from their room filled with flowers and veggies, an old basketball made into a gazing ball, or an old bike frame as a plant stand. Use or build items that have meaning for them. Show them the use of math in construction; someday they will find use for algebra or geometry while constructing a project.

Grandmother’s old kitchen tools could make interesting textures or planters; colanders make great homes for succulents; plates for stop over spots for little birds or butterflies; or a colored bottle tree as a focal point mixed in with their favorite plants. By positioning their plot to be viewable from your home those young gardeners have something to share with visitors and family alike. Involving children will create the love of gardening for life.

Family heirlooms that withstand the weather are perfect for garden art. Place an old-fashioned claw foot tub as a soaking tub under a tree. When finished soaking, use the water to give the tree a drink. The tub could also be a pond for fish or a planter for annuals. A tub overflowing with nasturtiums is a beautiful picture.

Grandma had many items that are historical and interesting. Metal baking dishes become vegetable harvesters, tool holders, candle holders, and pathway borders. Metal headboards and footboards easily make fencing or gates. Old cookie pans may be used to protect birdfeeders from the rain or sun. Items that would be tossed now have a permanent life in your yard.

Old tools are perfect for items that need to be suspended. A shovel head acts as a shelf when the metal handle is inserted into a hole in a wooden post – perfect to hold a lantern, candle, or solar light. Bow rakes hold wind chimes or cloth flags. A combination of tools may be shaped into a trellis: use the handles as stakes and the tool heads as the top of the trellis. Install cross members easily with zip ties.

Mechanical tools that no longer work are great focal points. Wringers from old wringer washers, hand plows, come-alongs, and unidentifiable items from the past are perfect. A mystery item

provides lessons about our past and the trials of living. Demonstrating the difficulty of churning butter or plowing by hand will lead to discussions of just how hard life can be.

Yards should be interesting. Art may be water proof paintings, a child tricycle planted in a large clay pot with flowers, or a fence made from an old brass headboard. Build your landscape around you, your family, and your history.

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