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# Heaven Is A Garden: Designing Serene Spaces For Inspiration And Reflection



## Synopsis

Why do some gardens make us feel so wonderful, relaxed and refreshed? Using ideas based on ancient and modern practices, this book shows how you can uplift yourself and others in a serene setting designed for "unplugging" and relaxing. Whether you are intending to create a lovely garden or just thinking about a future outdoor haven, *Heaven is a Garden* will help you see your backyard in a whole new light and reawaken an awareness of the wonders of Nature.

"Simplicity, Sanctuary and Delight" is the guideline that noted landscape designer Jan Johnsen recommends in this elegantly written book. She draws on her 40 years in the profession and offers stunning visuals and specific ways to make a garden look glorious and feel harmonious at the same time. She reveals how to highlight a power spot, explores the lure of the sheltered corner, explains why a gate facing East is considered auspicious and suggests which trees you can use to impart a special atmosphere. Gardeners will also enjoy the chapters on the mysteries of color, a rock's resonance and the magic of water. All in all, this gem of a book is a thoroughly enjoyable guide that you will refer to over and over. Jan Johnsen writes the popular "Serenity in the Garden" blog and Facebook page. Her firm's website is [www.johnsenlandscapes.com](http://www.johnsenlandscapes.com) [www.serenityinthegarden.blogspot.com](http://www.serenityinthegarden.blogspot.com)

## Book Information

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: St. Lynn's Press (March 15, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0985562293

ISBN-13: 978-0985562298

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 66 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #228,436 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Decorating & Design > Feng Shui](#) #130 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Landscape](#) #162 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Garden Design](#)

## Customer Reviews

"It's a book that every designer will want as a reference ... and a great gift for any client or anyone you know who loves landscapes and gardens." - Jane Berger, Garden Design Online  
"The book is a

delight -- smart and well written, not too long, and full of practical 'I-didn't-know-that' tips for home gardeners. It's beautifully illustrated, too, with her own photos of landscapes she has designed and installed.... If you've got a gardener on your gift list, keep this book in mind." - Bill Cary, Westchester Journal News

"Just about everyone who visits a garden falls under its spell. In *Heaven is a Garden*, Jan Johnsen shows us how we can create a garden that transports and transforms us - where cares fall away, blood pressure lowers, and peace washes over our souls."

- Ken Druse, best-selling author, award-winning photographer and garden communicator  
"Her garden photography is gorgeous and demonstrates simple garden designs that are easy for a gardener to conceptualize and use as a guide for their home gardens. I enjoyed the book and have flipped the pages over and over in quiet reflection of the photos - truly wonderful design examples... What a lovely book!" - Shawna Coronado, *Making a Difference Every Day*

"...Johnsen...combines ancient wisdom with contemporary horticultural practices to provide a more holistic approach to landscape design...The results are tranquil, serene landscapes that affect the readers on different physical and spiritual levels. I found myself looking around my yard with a new, more informed perspective, and I bet you will too." - Teresa O'Connor, *Seasonal Wisdom* garden blog  
"When it's the last time you read a gardening book cover to cover, all in one sitting? Up until a few weeks ago, my answer to that question would have been, "A gardening book? NEVER." But then I read "Heaven is a Garden." Cover to cover. All in one sitting. And then I read it again. I'll probably read it again because it's that captivating! This book is impossible to put down because partly due to the fascinating content, but also because Jan is a gifted storyteller whose choice of words and melodic phrasing beckon you in and invite you to stay. The bow on this exquisite gift of a book is the fact that the photographs are personal examples of Jan's gorgeous garden and landscape design work - it's fabulous! (Gwen Holloway Garden Bunch)  
Jan Johnsen touches my soul with her insights on gardens, as well as on living life. You'll be touched too as she teaches you how to create a divine, unhurried landscape with simplicity, sanctuary and delight. -Jim Peterson, Publisher, *Garden Design Magazine*  
"Whether you are intending to create a lovely garden or just thinking about a future outdoor haven, *Heaven is a Garden* will help you see your backyard in a whole new light and reawaken an awareness of the wonders of Nature." -Kathy Jentz, Publisher of the *Washington Gardener*  
Mixing little known, fascinating facts with a sense of wonder about the environment, Jan Johnsen guides us through proven techniques to infuse serenity in our gardens. She begins with an explanation of three simple words: simplicity, sanctuary and delight - the basis for creating gardens that inspire us and provide a place for reflection. With so many other good suggestions in this book

as well, anyone who designs gardens should have this book on their resource shelf. -Vanessa Gardner Nagel, designer, author Director of Communications, Association of Professional Landscape Designers  
Heaven is a garden, and similarly, a garden is heaven. Jan Johnsen brought heaven, beauty and tranquility to my own garden. She's the best! -John T. Mickel, Curator of Ferns Emeritus, New York Botanical Garden; Author of Ferns for American Gardens  
Heaven is a Garden transports the reader with an exquisite combination of ancient garden design principles and twenty-first century creativity and innovation. A definite must for every nature and garden enthusiast. -Bente Hansen, author, energy healer

Why do some gardens make us feel so wonderful, relaxed and refreshed? Using ideas based on ancient and modern practices, this book shows how you can uplift yourself and others in a serene setting designed for "unplugging" and relaxing. Whether you are intending to create a lovely garden or just thinking about a future outdoor haven, Heaven is a Garden will help you see your backyard in a whole new light and reawaken an awareness of the wonders of Nature. "Simplicity, Sanctuary and Delight" is the guideline that noted landscape designer Jan Johnsen recommends in this elegantly written book. She draws on her 40 years in the profession and offers stunning visuals and specific ways to make a garden look glorious and feel harmonious at the same time. She reveals how to highlight a power spot, explores the lure of the sheltered corner, explains why a gate facing East is considered auspicious and suggests which trees you can use to impart a special atmosphere. Gardeners will also enjoy the chapters on the mysteries of color, a rock's resonance and the magic of water. All in all, this gem of a book is a thoroughly enjoyable guide that you will refer to over and over. Jan Johnsen writes the popular "Serenity in the Garden" blog and Facebook page. Her firm's website is [www.johnsenlandscapes.com](http://www.johnsenlandscapes.com) [www.serenityinthegarden.blogspot.com](http://www.serenityinthegarden.blogspot.com)

I bought this book because I am a designer in the Northeast, and I was impressed with several of the author's projects for high profile clients. From what I understand, 'Heaven is a Garden' is essentially the Cliffs Notes to Johnsen's graduate school design studio at Columbia University. I have met a few of her students, and a few of her clients. The common reaction that I get from them is that she seems to have an inner gift for visiting a site and immediately recognizing its specific strengths and weaknesses. After reading the book, it is clear to me that Johnsen makes it look easy because she is passionate about the subject and because she has spent decades developing her talents. Like any successful designer, this is a woman who pays very careful attention to every

detail, and leaves nothing to chance. The book itself is a perfect example. When it arrived I was surprised by the 8.5"x8.5" dimensions. I own two bookcases full of garden design books, and virtually all of them are oversized. When I opened it, it immediately became clear to me that the size was no accident. Neither is its sturdy construction. I can't remember the last hardcover garden book I bought that didn't have a paper jacket. Evidently Johnsen intended to write a book that any designer could keep handy and refer to continually -from someone working in their own yard, to a professional like myself. I'm putting it right into my work bag, next to my plant identification books, my 200ft tape measure and my graph paper. A common axiom in the trade is that there are no "new" ideas: "Take what you like, and make it your own." 'Heaven is a Garden' is packed with historical references, cultural inspirations and unconventional insights that prepare the reader to find the unique qualities (and avoid costly mistakes) for every site. Thanks to this book, I will be borrowing ideas from Johnsen for years to come.

I have been a landscape designer for many years and teach garden design at the New York Botanical Garden. I have a rather large collection of garden books, as many gardeners and garden lovers do. Heaven is a Garden is the best garden book I have ever read! Jan Johnsen has a style of writing that just flows and draws you in. I didn't want to stop reading! The photos are all so beautiful and inspiring. I will always keep Heaven is a Garden with me to show to clients, students and friends. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in gardens and creating serenity around their home. This book is a great gift, also!

Love it! Jan writes with not only a lifetime of experience under her belt, but with her heart! Passion, Serenity, Simplicity and Spirituality are just some key notes that I got out of reading, 'Heaven is a garden.' The photos are professional (people of all ages will be in awe) and the quality of writing is top notch, with a dash of witty goodness. May I add, that the quality of craftsmanship for the book is brilliant. In all, the book represents Johnsen's Successful career as a Garden Master/Landscape Designer, perfectly.

This is a hard book to put down! It takes flight the moment it begins. Many garden publications concentrate on the technical, but this book makes you "feel" the green space that surrounds us. It's unlike anything else I've encountered in the genre. Own it! You will not regret it.

The author of this book recently taught a class at NY Botanical Garden. She is amazing, creative,

spiritual and knows her stuff. I take every class she teaches. Her book is as amazing as she. Right after class I ordered it online. She has a new book coming out which I am pre-ordering after I write this comment

If you've ever wondered why some garden spaces evoke pleasurable emotions, then Jan Johnsen's *Heaven is a Garden* is the book for you. With the use of beautiful photographs ( many of which are her inspired designs ) and descriptions, Jan artfully explains why these spaces resonate with us. Evoking the use of natural occurring shapes and principles it becomes apparent that these sensual feelings have their roots in a shared archetypal history. A must read for amateurs and professionals. Thank you Jan for a beautiful book and one that will find a prominent spot in my collection.

This book is a treasure chest of creative ideas accompanied with practical tips you can put to use in your own garden, and it also is engagingly written and filled with gorgeous photographs. A full page photo of a beautiful spot Johnsen created in a shady garden features a Japanese stone water basin and it is a testament to her genius as a landscape architect--just looking at that image on paper provides a palpable feeling of serenity. Fortunately, she shares plenty of concrete advice on how to create such magic in your own space, no matter how big or small it is. There is terrific information about choosing colors for your garden (including some scientific evidence about the effect specific colors have on our minds and emotions). She also includes a fascinating section on how rocks can play a role equal to or surpassing plants in a garden, and even gives tips about which flowers are best to plant in rock crevices. Passing along wisdom not just about creating a garden, but about life itself, Johnsen incorporates thought-provoking words that run the gamut from Einstein, Jung and Loren Eiseley to haiku and Taoist verse. But she is also quite a gifted writer herself. Describing the pleasure of being fully in the present moment in a garden, Johnson says: "We lose track of time as we sip tea and marvel at the nuanced colors of a blossom or enjoy the dance of clouds overhead. Gardens can also signal the flow of time—daily time, seasonal time and yearly time—by unfurling leaves and bursting buds, by nascent seed pods and frost on glistening evergreens. This is Nature's time, a quiet unspiral of experience that envelops us wholly. In contrast, she writes, "human, mechanical time divides our days into hours, minutes, seconds, milliseconds exerting a constant pressure on our lives,

superseding all else. In short, this book is inspiring and a total pleasure to read, whether you're a passionate gardener yourself or not.

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