

## BALANCE AND SCALE IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Many established neighborhoods have an abundance of mature trees lining streets and accenting yards. Stately Royals, regal Queens and traditional Coconut palms thrive in our sub-tropical environment. From a distance, their presence makes a dramatic statement. But if you have to look more than five feet above your roofline to see the top of a palm tree, it is probably out of scale for the setting of your house and out of view from interior rooms. This common problem baffles many homeowners, but the fix is relatively easy.

It's about scale and balance, two key elements of landscape design. Your trees are the most permanent pieces in the landscape. A tree that rises 30-plus feet before any display of greenery requires an under story of smaller trees, shrubs and flowerbeds to bring it back into scale. For example, plant Vera Wood as a secondary tree. Align it with a large shrub such as Cattley Guava. Using the outermost branches, or drip line, as a guide to correct bed size, plant Caladiums or Coleus for colorful accents at ground level. This tier-down effect avoids the common practice of ringing a solitary tree base with a collar of flowers, a design that accentuates lack of scale.

Depending on your existing trees, you might choose a formal design with identical plantings balancing each side. For an asymmetrical plan, use odd numbers of plantings and diagonal patterns to achieve balance.

The dark green canopy of a Ligustrum tree creates a dramatic framing effect when planted on a diagonal line outward from the front corners of a house. For background interest behind or beside your house, the Mahogany is a good candidate, as is the Gumbo-Limbo with its distinctive bark.

For those trees that have grown to resemble concrete sentinels in the yard, attaching orchids at eye level will draw them back into the landscape. Add visual appeal to a patio area by filling in with multiple-trunk palm varieties such as Alexander or MacArthur. Or incorporate one or more tree trunks as corner stones for a decorative hedge of Eugenia to define an outside dining spot or play area.

Tie landscape areas together by using different plant forms, textures and colors in repeating patterns. For a bold look, plant groupings of Liriope with Philodendron 'Hope' and Acalyphas.

