



Garden Islands

A Garden Island is a good way to define an area in your yard. Let's say you have an undeveloped area in your yard and want to create a garden island there, you simply put markers three or four feet away from the adjacent planting in that area, now you use a hose to make a design pattern. The design should be free handed and look pleasing to the eye, keep it free flowing. Use the other plantings that border the garden island you're creating to give you a lay-out pattern, your design will flow parallel and evenly spaced to the adjacent plantings in that area. If your yard is undeveloped, a good place to start is the center of the yard. Now create a pattern you like and a size you can handle. Later you can create other garden islands off the first one and keep on going, forming a puzzle or paisley effect, creating walkways between all the garden islands. We used a Garden Island when we installed our own preformed foldable pond liner system in our backyard. But, you can also put plants in your garden island. The choice is up to you.

Garden Island construction: you want to define your garden island with a bordering material. There are many items you can choose from, such as rocks, boulders, edging materials, bricks, patio blocks, pavers, cut railroad ties, cut landscape ties, and my favorite, retaining wall blocks (**RWB**). We will use **RWB** for our project. **RWB** can be stacked, shaped, graded or just follow the lay of the land, easily creating the desired look you want. We will do a free form, two blocks high following the lay of the land. Pick your location; use your garden hose to create the design you want. If there is grass remove all the grass in your design and rake the area smooth this will give you a good base to start laying your **RWB**. Now start laying down blocks next to each other, keeping all the blocks at the same height, nice and smooth. When the first row is finished, start your second row. The last block of the second row will have to be cut, because as you add rows, the perimeter will get smaller, (a cone effect). Simply measure what size block you need to fill the gap, and score it with a stone chisel by hammering the block, creating a groove around the block until it separates. Now insert the cut block, and then check your perimeter for eye appeal, making sure all the blocks are the same height, nice and smooth. We are now ready to add soil and amendments to you raised Garden Island.

Adding Amendments: The soil whether a clay or sandy loam, should have peat moss, bone meal and a good plant fertilizer, such as Planttone added. The amount varies on the condition of the soil. The best solution is to read the manufacturers directions. Now we are ready to plant.

Plantings: A good rule of thumb is to plant in groups of three. I would take one deciduous tree like a Japanese maple, and two different types of juniper topiaries. This should be the base of your island. The rest of the plantings can be ground cover, perennials and annuals for color. Now let's address accessories.

Accessories: There are many accessories to choose from and that is up to the individual's taste. It could be a bird bath or Large to medium size rocks placed strategically in the landscape, maybe a statue or ornament, like a gazing ball. The choices are endless and fun, it's like the cherry on the Sunday. Next time we will talk about **water features** in the Garden Islands.