



Design in the Little Garden

Fletcher karson

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Among the many books published about garden design, few manage to get at so many vital aspects of the topic so pungently as Fletcher Steele's *Design in the Little Garden*. First published in 1924, and reissued here with a new introduction by Robin Karson, the book captures the sense of possibility that Steele and his landscape architectural colleagues felt as the nation's population swelled and the middle class spilled out of the cities into new suburbs.

One of the foremost landscape designers of the early twentieth century, Steele published frequently in both popular and professional magazines, on topics that ranged from horticulture to conservation, civic improvement, modernism, and space composition. In this slim volume, he tackles the challenges of designing the residential landscape, while also addressing architectural and planning issues and recommending several innovative strategies for suburban house design.

Steele organized his book for clarity and ease of use. Brief chapters focus on both process ("Buying Land") and features ("The Flower Garden," "Rock, Wild, and Wall Gardens," "Grading, Steps, Walks," "Toolhouse, Cold Frames," etc.). In the course of guiding an imaginary couple through the exercise of buying a new home and designing, planting, and maintaining the surrounding yard, he gives life to the guiding principles of cohesion and utility.

Written in an engaging voice, with a sharp wit sometimes tempered by affectionate exasperation, *Design in the Little Garden* provides a concise summary of Steele's design principles and a delightful read for anyone interested in garden design at any scale.

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