

Revive, Replace and Reinvigorate the Garden

Richie Steffen
Coordinator of Horticulture
Elisabeth C Miller Botanical Garden

Improving weak areas in the garden

List the positive qualities – Capitalize on these features

List the poor qualities – Use these as the foundation of renovation.
What elements of design are lacking?

Thinking about the elements of design

Balance – Asymmetrical balance and judging visual weight

Texture – Obtaining a pleasing mix of contrasting and complementing textures

Form – Discovering and defining outlines, shapes and patterns

Harmony – Making each individual work with each other and the surrounding garden

Rhythm – creating flow and movement through the garden space

Layers in the garden

Groundcovers	up to 3 feet	More evergreen
Mid-level (visual level)	3 to 10 feet	
Low canopy	10 to 20 feet	
Mid-canopy	20 to 40 feet	
High canopy	40 feet and up	Less evergreen

Developing the Missing Links

Evaluating existing plantings

Size – Does it really matter?

Structure – Improving the framework

Evergreen to deciduous ratio

Peak seasonal interest – When does it need to be perfect?

Pruning, thinning and removals

Repetition – What can be repeated to develop continuity

This is especially important for the groundcover and mid-level layers of the garden.

Creating focal points – Major and minor focal points

Using focal points to guide you through the bed

Hardscape Features

Stages of Reviving the Garden

Year 1

1. Pruning , thinning, and removals
2. Soil prep, Placement of major hardscape elements and most prominent plants
3. Placement of secondary hardscape elements and plants

Year 2

1. Evaluation of the performance of the old and new plants
2. Prune, thin and remove failed plants and poor performers
3. Add to existing plantings with a special focus on repetition and filling in groundcovers

Year 3

1. Evaluation of overall performance
2. Fill in spaces with a special focus on repetition
3. Add depth by paying attention to seasonal gaps. This is also a good year to evaluate placement of bulbs into the bed.