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# Garden Guru

Kristopher Dabner of The Greensman shares tips and trends in landscape design

Kristopher Dabner, owner and creative director of landscape and garden design company The Greensman, brings his creative thinking and impeccable style to everything he touches. The inspired designer not only has a green thumb, but a big heart. He is very involved—both personally and professionally—with a number of philanthropic organizations in the Kansas City community, including Wayside Waifs, DIFFA KC and Hyde Park-based women’s shelter Catherine’s Place.

**Q. Is garden/landscape design influenced by trends in the same way fashion and interior designs are?**

A. Absolutely. For example, colors—orange flowers are very hot right now. It’s been a big color in interiors and fashion for a while, but it takes time for the nursery business to catch up. Now some plants that weren’t popular for a while, primarily because they are orange, are fashionable again. Likewise, there’s been a trend for this sort of mod, retro look in interiors in the last few years, and now outdoor furniture manufacturers are making groovy, midcentury modern-style lawn chairs. And people are starting to landscape in line with that contemporary look. They want a simpler, more refined plant palette. The trend is large swaths of the same plants, and choices are more about texture and foliage color than flowers.

**Q. What are some other current trends?**

A. Outdoor living environments, especially kitchens and pizza ovens and fireplaces. People really want to move their entertaining and their family time outside.

**Q. Where do you find inspiration?**

A. Travel, for starters. Anytime I can get on a plane and go somewhere I’m happy. Wherever I go, I always take time to visit the gardens. I go on a lot of garden tours locally too, just to see what other



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people are doing. I also love going down to First Fridays to look around the design showrooms and galleries.

**Q. What can those of us without green thumbs do to make the most of our gardens?**

A. First of all, create a master plan. Think about what you want out of your garden long term, and plan for it, rather than just being swayed by something that just catches your eye when you're at the store. That can lead to costly mistakes. Secondly, create a place to sit—even if it's just a garden bench or a couple of Adirondack chairs. You're much more likely to spend time in your garden if you have that, and the more you get out in your garden and enjoy it, the better it's going to be for you. Finally, plant what you love. If you love blueberries, get a blueberry bush. Or if peonies remind you of happy times in your grandmother's garden, plant one. Those are the kinds of things that are going to connect you with a garden as opposed to having it be a chore.

**Q. If you weren't a landscape/garden designer, what would you be?**

A. I would probably be working for a nonprofit somewhere as a development director. I'm actively involved in a number of organizations around town, such as Wayside Waifs and DIFFA KC. I love what they do and I never get tired of talking about them. That's what I'm most passionate about, after gardening.

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After earning a bachelors in architecture from the University of Kansas, Dabner designed sets for locally produced films and became art director on a national weekly TV show before launching his landscape design business.