

# TOPIARY GARDEN



What's a garden without a bit of wonder and whimsy? It really doesn't matter what style of garden you have, there is a topiary that will fit right in. From geometric shapes to sculpted characters, these ornamental plants add interest and dimension to any garden. You may be surprised to learn the history of topiary. They are typically associated with English gardens, and British fondness for topiary is evident in the oldest living topiary garden at Levens Hall in Cumbria, England. That garden, with over 100 specimens, dates back to the 17th century and was laid out by the gardener of King James II. But the first recorded topiary gardens, grown from mainly cypress trees, were in the 1st century in ancient Rome. After the fall of Rome, topiary wasn't popular again until the Italian Renaissance. Animal figures became popular in Dutch gardens in the 15th century with England following suit in the 17th century. The French preferred geometric shapes emphasizing symmetry. Finally, America's history with topiary began in Williamsburg, Virginia around 1690.

## Topiary Royalty!



Although not physically located in the Topiary Garden, our topiary kingdom is ruled by Leo the Lion, found in the Formal Garden. We can't talk about the topiary wonders at The Garden without including Leo. If you haven't seen him yet, he's a stand out in the Formal Garden where he waits to greet you while watching over his realm. The team that maintains the Topiary Garden, also grooms Leo from his magnificent mane to his terrific tail. Leo's lofty position of royalty is clearly shown by placing him on a raised planter. The surrounding blocks are, of course, his castle!

## TOPIARY GARDEN (continued) - ANIMALS



Watchful Bunny. Built entirely out of rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*), our bunny rabbit is the hit of the holidays at The Garden. He is frequently adorned with all sorts of decor adding fun and fancy to the main walking path. A special time of year is during spring. After all, there's something magic about a 4ft tall Easter Bunny, right? Typically, Rosemary blooms from fall to spring, so this bunny gets a fuzzy look to him adds to the looks. Rosemary plants are drought tolerant once established and does best in full sun, but will tolerate shade, most soil types, and heavy pruning, so its a great plant to learn topiary with.



Playful Elephant. Our romping elephant is grown from a plant called Formosa Firethorn (*Pyracantha 'Santa Cruz'*). What a fun addition to a garden for the serious, but not too serious, home gardener. Firethorn has a bit of a spreading growth habit, so it needs more frequent trimming and training than other plants to get the desired shape. But its spreading nature also allows for faster growth and helps fill in some of the twists and turns of a topiary animal. It also sports white blossoms followed by red berries in the fall and into winter, adding a holiday touch to any garden. It is drought tolerant and attracts birds.



Young Giraffe. Not only is this character a young giraffe, so are the plants starting to fill him in. This is a perfect example of the process for growing a topiary bush. Once grown in, this framework will be filled in and covered by Variegated Dwarf Myrtle (*Myrtus communis compacta 'variegata'*). In the meantime, this little guy requires training the plant to grow in the right direction and plenty of patience. Topiary is not something you plant and have immediate impact from. But when done right, it's well worth the wait. Keep checking back at The Garden to watch our little giraffe grow up.

## TOPIARY GARDEN (continued) - TREES



Pom Poms. You can sculpt a topiary into nearly anything, including a variety of shapes and dimensions. Here we have sculpted random, round growths which show different angles and sizes from the same trunk. This particular plant, Chinese Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*), allows for a lot of variety. It can grow to 6ft tall and 5ft wide, so you have a lot of leeway to work with allowing you to fit it into a number of tough-to-fill spots in your garden. It is drought tolerant when established and prefers full sun. As with the other topiary in this garden, it's an evergreen so you can enjoy this vibrant shade of green year-round.



Wedding Cake. As mentioned above, topiary can take on a variety of shapes and sizes. Express your own creativity, or add a focal feature that perfect fits your garden design. In this case we sculpted a Waxleaf Privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) to look like a three-layered cake. Topiary takes patience since these shrubs take up to three years to fill in. But there's a trade off: slow growers are perfect for topiary. You shape them as they grow and they don't grow out of control quickly, so maintaining the shape is less work. A feature plant for the garden requiring minimal maintenance and drought tolerant? Magnificent!



Spiral. The shape of this topiary is made easier by the natural growth pattern of the plant it is grown out of, Chinese 'Spear-mint' Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* 'Spear-mint'). This cultivar of Juniper grows in an upright column up to 10-15ft tall but only 3-5ft wide. So, once the trim lines are established between the spirals, the growth pattern of the plant itself contributes to the mature shape and requires very little pruning. Like the plants we use in our Topiary Garden, this one is drought tolerant once established. It also does well in many types of soils, so this is a real contended for home gardens in our county.

## TOPIARY GARDEN (continued) - EXTRAS



Mix and Match. If you have the room, why not display a variety of shapes, sizes and foliage. Although the two on the outside are both Chinese Junipers, the one on the right is the “Spearmint” cultivar, and you can see what a difference it makes. The leaves and density are remarkably different. Then, sandwiched between them, is a Waxleaf Privet which has an entirely different look to its leaves. Just imagine the different combinations you can achieve by mixing plant selections in your garden. And if this isn’t enough, there is another Chinese Juniper at the right end of the Topiary Garden with yet another shape.



Features make it. And speaking of different variety of plants, when using characters or animals for topiary, take the opportunity to use varieties of plants to represent different parts of the animal. This results in a contrasts of color and texture when done right. As you can see with Leo here, his body is Dwarf Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) and mane is Variegated Dwarf Myrtle (*Myrtus communis* ‘*variegata*’). This makes his mane a different shade of green and appears hairier than his body. For an special touch, add decor to suggest eyes, noses, and mouths. There’s just nothing quite like a garden that smiles at you!

### Topiary Garden viewed from above in the Bird & Butterfly Garden

