



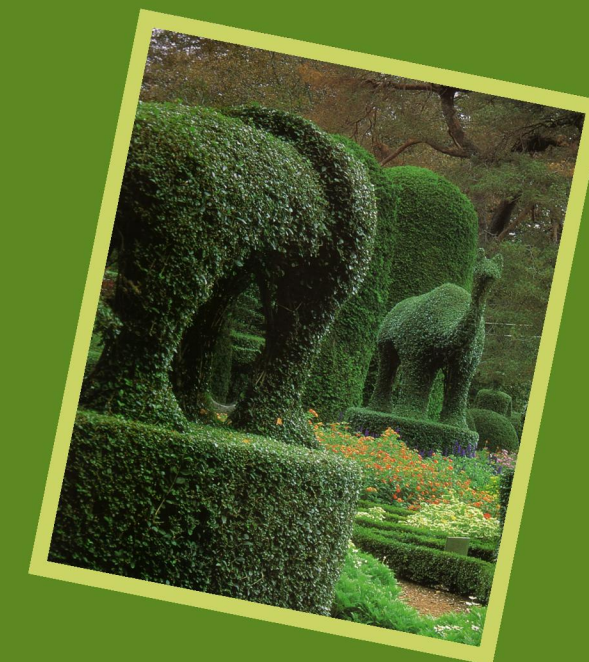
## Getting Started

So what exactly is living sculpture? Living sculpture is any art that is made with plants. There isn't any right and wrong when it comes to art. Below are four distinct categories of living art.

However, don't feel limited by these categories. There are many more possibilities than are suggested here. You can mix and match techniques, invent your own, or even combine living art with conventional art. Start with small individual projects, and work your way up; or jump right in and organize a community project. Please use the information presented here and the information found on our website, <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/livingsculpture>, as a helpful guide and not as an exact recipe for success. Take a look at all of the photos and dream of where you want living sculpture to take you.

## Topiary

Topiary is one of the oldest and most refined forms of living art, dating as far back as 23 AD. It is a beautiful form of living art that has transitioned in and out of style through the ages. Topiary relies on the pruning and training of trees, vines, and shrubs, to create two- or three dimensional forms. Topiary can also be constructed by training a plant onto a pre-constructed form.



Many associate topiary with elaborate estate gardens, but it can also be found as decorative tabletop house plants. Outdoor topiary is larger scale and takes years to train. Indoor topiaries are smaller in size and can be easily managed. If you are new to living sculpture and are interested in topiary, we suggest that you begin with a simple indoor design, training a plant on to a simple wire form.

Once completed, both indoor and outdoor topiary make wonderful additions to any home and garden space. However, topiary is a continuous work in progress. It is never finished! Just like any home or garden plant, topiary needs to be watered, pruned, and taken care of, so the basic plant care rules apply. Keep in mind the maintenance requirements when selecting the size of your topiary, shape of your form, and type of plant you will use.

# Living Sculpture

## GET INSPIRED!

## Mowing & Crop Art

Mowing and crop art are fabulously fun forms of living sculpture. They are usually on a much larger scale, up to many acres in size! Mowing and crop art are usually meant to be viewed from up above. There is often a great deal of planning involved in order to create a design on such a large scale. Designs range from detailed images to abstract forms. This art technique primarily uses changes in crop height to create illusions of pattern, form, color, and depth for an overall design. Common techniques used to create changes in height are mowing, rolling, pressing, burning, or cultivating of large planted fields or grass yards. Mowing and crop art is generally temporary as the crop will re-grow or return to it's original state fairly quickly. You may be more familiar with this form of living sculpture than you realize: athletic fields across the country use this same concept to etch team logos and celebratory designs for the big game. Have you ever been through a corn maze?



Although, this type of art often takes some forethought and hard work, it is mainly accomplished by everyday home and garden techniques. So, the next time it is your turn to mow the grass, try something new. In stead of back and forth lines, try zigzags or swirls. Play with different heights; mow some sections of grass and let other sections grow. Once you have achieved basic shapes, try a more defined image or icon. Increase the size of your art and try different crops, and before you know it you will be a pro!



## Turf Art



In this type of living sculpture, a base material, usually soil, is mounded and shaped into the desired form and is then covered in sod or seeded. Turf art has plenty of room for flexibility. Any shape or design, abstract or realistic, can be created. It only takes imagination and hard work. The more complicated the form, the more planning is involved. Some designs may need extra internal framing and support. Turf art can be temporary or permanent. It can also be small or large. Small tabletop turf works can be completed in a few hours as an individual project. Large turf art pieces require a friend or two because of the labor involved.

When designing your turf art, consider the maintenance requirements of the size, shape and location of your piece. Will watering be an issue? Is sunlight and shading an issue? Think about all factors before beginning to build. Always measure your location first and estimate the size of your sculpture. Soil compacts tightly and estimated measurements are sometimes incorrect, so always obtain more materials than you think you will need. Drawing things out on paper will make the planning and construction of your work easier.

Sod furniture is a popular, yet simple, large turf art piece. The less detailed forms, low maintenance requirements, and functionality make sod furniture a great place to begin. Other popular forms include animals and abstract designs.



## Tree Sculpture

There are two styles of tree sculpture: woven branch and arborisculpture. Woven branch art is like basket weaving; branches are interlaced together to form a decorative lattice. Arborisculpture is a larger, longer term type of woven branch art that utilizes grafting and plant propagation techniques. Woven branch art can be completed in anywhere from a few hours to a few growing seasons.

Arborisculpture takes many years to complete, as graft unions fuse and trees grow larger. Both can add functional and decorative elements to your garden or landscape.



Willow is commonly used for woven branch art because it roots well. A popular woven branch art piece is the willow dome. Willow domes are great for children's play spaces and garden shade. A simple structure, like a dome, is a great place to start for the beginning arborisculptor.



## Tips

- **Start Small** - If you are new to living sculpture, try a few small scale projects and work your way up to larger projects.
- **Practice Basic Skills** - Try using pruning shears, mowing zigzags, grafting, etc. on test materials or locations before beginning your final piece.
- **Don't Worry** - Living materials are unpredictable, so don't fret if your sculpture does not come out exactly as planned. As you perfect your living sculpture talents, you will learn more tricks of the trade.
- **Be Adventurous** - Try new techniques and design ideas. Think out side of the box.
- **Tell a Friend** - Art is more fun with friends. Tell someone about the amazing world of living sculpture and get inspired together!



## Contact Us

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