



Mobile AI and place

Description

Some smartphones incorporate AI features. I recently acquired the latest iPhone that now supports Apple Intelligence. The operations are not yet seamless, but that development encouraged me to think about how conversational AI might inform my experience of a place. After all, location aware mobile phones track position, journeys, weather conditions, images and sounds of the place you are in.

ChatGPT is good at providing evocative descriptions of images and constructing colourful narratives. Place-aware human beings can do that too, but we often lack the patience to itemise what we observe and to create ordered inventories.

Inventorize your world

I took two photographs of a private garden to which I have access and prompted ChatGPT: I just took these two panoramic photos in a garden. Please create a tabulated inventory showing category, item, description, function and contribution to the mood of the garden.



It did so, but there were gaps, notably names of plant species. When prompted it explained that plant identification was less certain during winter months, but it was able to list likely plant species considering the location and time of year. It identified holly, ivy, box hedge, laurel as likely plantings. These were correct. To assist further I provided some pictures of garden details.



It generated the following table.

Category	Item	Description	Function	Contribution to Mood
Hardscape	Stone Pathway	Brick or stone path leading through the garden	Provides structure and guides movement	Enhances a sense of order and direction
Hardscape	Wooden Bridge	Green-painted wooden bridge over the stream	Connects two areas, offering a focal point	Adds a rustic, picturesque charm
Water Feature	Stream	A flowing water body cutting through the garden	Adds movement and natural ambiance	Creates a calming and meditative atmosphere
Vegetation	Deciduous Trees	Tall, leafless trees lining the garden	Provide seasonal shade and vertical contrast	Evokes a natural, changing environment
Vegetation	Evergreen Shrubs	Dense, green shrubs scattered throughout	Adds year-round greenery and structure	Brings continuity and balance
Vegetation	Climbing Plants	Vines and climbers on trellises	Adds vertical interest and softens structures	Creates a sense of enclosure and intimacy
Ornament	Bird Bath	A stone bird bath in the garden	Attracts birds and enhances biodiversity	Adds charm and an inviting feel for wildlife

Garden Decor	Terracotta Pots	Scattered planters, some broken	Holds plants and adds rustic aesthetic	Enhances an aged, naturalistic ambiance
Seating & Utility	Wheelbarrow & Tools	Gardening tools and wheelbarrow	Indicates active garden maintenance	Gives a lived-in, working-garden feel
Boundary	Wooden Fence & Trellis	Fence with trellis partially covered by plants	Defines space and supports climbing plants	Creates a cozy, enclosed atmosphere
Vegetation	Ivy Ground Cover	Thick ivy growing near the stream	Prevents soil erosion and softens edges	Adds lushness and contrasts with stone elements
Water Feature	Pond with Dripping Water Source	A small pond with a gentle dripping water source	Enhances biodiversity and supports aquatic life	Creates a tranquil, reflective ambiance
Hardscape	Pergola	A wooden pergola structure near the seating area	Provides shade and serves as a structural focal point	Adds a sense of enclosure and architectural interest
Vegetation	Cotoneaster horizontalis	Leafless shrub with small red berries	Provides winter interest and attracts birds	Adds structure and seasonal color contrast
Vegetation	Photinia x fraseri â??Red Robinâ??	Evergreen shrub with red new growth	Used for hedging and as a feature plant	Adds vibrancy and year-round foliage interest
Vegetation	Clematis or Lonicera (Honeysuckle)	Deciduous climbing plant on trellis	Provides seasonal flowers and attracts pollinators	Creates vertical interest and softens structures
Vegetation	Camellia japonica	Evergreen shrub with glossy leaves and buds	Blooms in late winter to early spring	Adds seasonal floral beauty and lush greenery

I asked for an estimate of the number of each item in the field of view. It identified 5 deciduous trees, 6 evergreen shrubs, 2 vines, 4 terracotta pots. The other items were singular. It added this data to the inventory.

I prompted: â??Iâ??m here now. What can I do in this space?â?• ChatGPT told me, helpfully!

That depends on what you want to achieveâ??do you want to enhance biodiversity, create a more structured garden, introduce new planting schemes, or just enjoy the space? Here are a few ideas based on your gardenâ??s current state:

Short-Term (Today & This Week)

1. Observe & Take Notes

- Listen to the sounds (birds, water, wind).
- Look at how the space feels—are there areas that seem neglected or overgrown?
- Check for signs of wildlife (insects, birds, frogs in the pond).

2. Light Maintenance

- **Clear fallen leaves & debris** from the pond and pathways.
- **Check plant health** (look for signs of disease or stress).
- **Remove dead branches** from shrubs and trees to encourage new growth.

3. Encourage Early Spring Growth

- If temperatures are mild, **mulch around shrubs** like Camellia to retain moisture.
 - **Feed winter-flowering plants** to support blooms.
 - Prune **Cotoneaster horizontalis** if it's getting too tangled.
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Mid-Term (Next Few Months)

1. Enhance the Water Feature

- Consider introducing **oxygenating plants** into the pond.
- Add a **shallow stone ledge** for birds to bathe safely.
- If it's not already in place, a **small solar fountain** could increase aeration.

2. Improve the Pergola & Trellis

- If the climber is a Clematis or Honeysuckle, check if it needs **support or tying back**.
- Paint or oil the wood to protect it from weathering.
- Introduce **string lights or hanging planters** for atmosphere.

3. Wildlife & Pollinator Support

- Add **bee-friendly plants** such as lavender, rosemary, or alliums.
 - Place **small log piles** in a corner for insects and hedgehogs.
 - Install a **bird feeder near the pergola** but away from the security camera.
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Long-Term (Spring & Beyond)

1. Seasonal Planting

- Consider underplanting the trees with **woodland bulbs** like snowdrops or crocuses.
- Introduce **ferns or shade-loving perennials** near the stream.

2. Structural Enhancements

- If you want a more defined separation between wild and cultivated areas, consider **low edging or stepping stones** along pathways.
- Add **seating near the stream** for a contemplative space.

3. Rainwater Collection & Irrigation

- Use collected rainwater for **drip irrigation** in your greenhouse.
- If possible, channel **excess rainwater into the pond** instead of letting it run off.

To automate the creation of such data is of use in any research domain, from landscape to focus group transcripts. The mobile aspect of such tools moves such analysis into the world of place-based fieldwork.

Note

- Dall-e generated the featured image, prompted by: "Please provide a picture to illustrate my blog about this exchange. Something forensic, no human forms, but something suggesting a scientist looking at potential specimens with a magnifying glass. Photorealistic, post apocalyptic."

Category

1. Artificial Intelligence

Tags

1. database
2. garden
3. inventory
4. landscape

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