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IDEA BOOK

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Ideas for Planning a Garden

Why would anyone want to plant a garden? They look so pretty when others do it, but do you really have what it takes to plant a beautiful garden? Don't worry - the nice thing about your garden is that it's *yours*! It doesn't have to be perfectly symmetrical, a riot of continuous bloom or one that catches the eye of every passerby. It just needs to be a personal creation that makes you happy.

That said, there are a few guidelines that you will want to follow to get the most from your efforts. Thoughtful planning, correct planting and good maintenance practices are the foundation of all beautiful gardens.

Planning the Garden

The best way to choose plants is to begin with the location. Match plants based on similar requirements for light, water and soil conditions. Next, choose plants by period of bloom, trying to select varieties that will work together for a steady succession of color. Then, select plants by height, width and color. Give preference to native plants which are heartier and require less maintenance. To get the greatest joy from your flower bed, select the flowers that you love the most and, assuming favorable environmental conditions, plan the bed around these. You might enjoy a mix of plant types including flowering bulbs, perennials (return every year with a relatively short bloom cycle), annuals (live for only one season and produce continuous blooms, may be able to save the seeds), grasses, small shrubs and even ornamental vegetables such as asparagus and kale.

For the design of the border line. Curves provide greater eye moving more slowly curve. Grow the plants in masses of color and flowers should have an rigid lines or rows. This might take some experimentation, but the fun of a flower garden is that it doesn't have to be permanent!

Vary size, form, color and texture to maximize the plant combination appeal.

or bed, avoid a straight visual enjoyment, with the across a deeper groups large enough to form texture. Each group of irregular shape, avoiding

Vary size, form, color and texture to maximize the plant combination appeal. Place taller plants in the back of the bed or, if in a container, in the middle. Medium height species should be planted as a middle layer and dwarf varieties and ground covers in the front.

For a bed or border, the height of the tallest plants should be limited to $\frac{2}{3}$ the width of the bed. For example, the tallest plants in a 6 feet wide bed would be 4 feet. Vary height lines by letting some of the medium height groups extend into the taller plants and vice versa.

More on layout of plants in the garden bed, gardening in containers, and creating year-round beauty ...

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Ideas for Planting a Garden

The long-term health of a plant is determined by many factors: the soil quality, planting technique, location and water retention. The old saying “Plant a 50 cent plant in a \$5 hole” rings true!

Soil quality is one of the most important considerations. The soil should be porous enough to allow for good drainage but dense enough to retain some moisture between watering. Work in three to six inches of organic matter such as well-rotted manure to improve drainage in heavy clay or water-holding capacity in sandy soils. Apply about 2 lbs. per 100 square feet of low-nitrogen fertilizer into the top layer of soil. Contact your local Extension office to test your soil for pH and nutrient levels.

Be sure to locate the proper amount of “full sun” must have 6 or “partial sun” requirement. It is also important to the plant is in the sun. intense, a “full sun” plant may still not get enough sun exposure to grow at its best. A “full sun” plant that is under-exposed will produce less blooms and get leggy. A “shade” plant that gets too much sun may have leaves that are “washed out” and burned on the tips.

Soil quality, sun exposure, water and proper planting techniques are important components to planting a successful garden.

plant in a spot that provides the sunlight. A plant that requires more hours of sun daily. A calls for 4 – 6 hours of sun daily. consider the time of day that Since morning sun is not as that gets mostly morning sun

When preparing the planting hole, be sure to make the hole wide and deep enough to comfortably accept the plant’s root ball. If the soil is dry, it’s a good idea to fill the hole with water and allow time for the water to be fully absorbed. Loosen the soil inside of the hole. You can mix some of the original soil removed with some enriched planting medium but don’t replace the original soil entirely. The plant will need to adapt to its new location and, if it is happily growing in potting soil but, then, abruptly encounters the original soil, growth will be impeded.

More on planting guidelines & techniques ...

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✿ Ideas for Plant Selection ✿

Use the following criteria when choosing plants for your landscape and garden beds. When possible, give preference to natives that meet your garden criteria.

- Adapted well to our climate, able to withstand summer heat and humidity, survive winter temperatures and tolerate the occasional drought and/or flood,
- As disease and insect repellent as possible,
- Non-invasive or easily controlled,
- Produce color in the form of flowers, berries and/or leaves and can be used as part of a palette for all-season interest, e.g. one in a series of flowering plants that provide continuous color.

Over 150 plants that grow well on the Eastern Shore are listed, with many being natives. This section identifies plants such as Beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*) and Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) perennials, Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) grass, Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), Green & Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) groundcover, Fatsia (*Fatsia japonica*) shrub, and Canna Lilies (*Cannaceae*) a hardy subtropical.

Here is a sample of what this section includes:

PERENNIALS

The plants listed in this section are perennial forbs and herbs which are flowering, nongrassy herbaceous (non-woody) plants. This means that they produce seeds and have stems and leaves that die back at the end of each growing season versus woody plants, such as a shrub, whose stems remain year after year. Perennials return each year and have a relatively short bloom time. Since their leaves remain throughout the growing season, they can create beauty in the landscape even after blooming with their different textures, colors and forms.

Beebalm, [*Monarda fistulosa*](#)



This native plant grows 2' – 4' tall and up to 3' wide. It is easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. Its showy, fragrant pink/lavender blooms appear in the summer through early fall and make a good cut flower. Plant Beebalm in a naturalized garden or in a rain garden. Visit the Northampton Free Library Pollinator Garden in Nassawaddox to see a sample of this plant.

Ideas for Seeking Natives

Native plants evolved and spread without human intervention throughout their range in response to the unique characteristics of a region: the climate, soils, timing of rainfall, drought, and frost. Their evolution was also influenced by other species inhabiting the local community with which they formed complex and interdependent relationships. They form the basic component of the living landscape and provide food and shelter specially adapted to meet the needs of native animal species. Thus, native plants provide a practical and ecologically valuable alternative for landscaping.

Native plants offer many advantages to the home gardener. Although sometimes not as showy as a cultivated, non-native or exotic variety, native plants have many desirable attributes and are a beneficial addition to the landscape tapestry. As mentioned above, one of their most valuable benefits is that they support native wildlife, performing as “host plants” that provide for all stages of an animal’s lifecycle. Because of this, they attract a greater variety of birds and butterflies to the garden. They provide a natural habitat where these animals can find protection from the elements and from predators. And they provide the nutrition needed for a bird or butterfly to thrive, not just to get its stomach full!

Native plants require less water, fertilizer and pesticide, thus adding fewer chemicals to the landscape and maintaining water quality in nearby streams and rivers. Since well adapted to their surroundings, these plants require very little maintenance, and, once established, often surpass non-natives in ruggedness and resistance to drought, insects and disease.

The knowledgeable gardener understands that planting non-natives increases the risk of the more desirable natives being overtaken by plants that give back less and require more.

More on the how’s and why’s of planting natives ...

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Ideas for Deer Come & Go

A herd of beautiful, graceful deer on the horizon or in the field is a stirring sight to see. Most of us are fascinated by these lovely creatures with their dark eyes and soft muzzles, and their tolerance of humans allows us to view them from close proximity. It's a sad existence for these creatures of the forest, however, who are faced with encroaching development and threatened habitat which many times leaves them little choice but to graze on the delectable cultivars that gardeners so treasure.

Whether you want to see them stay or see them go, there are strategies for the homeowner to manage the deer that live on the perimeters of their yards. Below are plant lists and suggestions that both invite them in or keep them moving through with as little damage as possible.

DEER GO

For those who want to move them along, one must first keep in mind that no plant is impervious to deer browsing under adverse conditions. Planting the right trees, shrubs, and ornamental flowers is one of the best ways to deter deer. Although, in areas where deer density is moderate to high, this in combination with other controls are recommended. And, even so, don't be surprised if a plant on the "less likely to eat" list gets eaten!

Deer first seek out plants that are the most palatable or provide vital nutrients. Plants with hairy or fuzzy, prickly and heavily fragrant foliage are not palatable. Deer don't like fuzzy or hairy texture against their tongues, so plants such as grasses, lambs ear and lady's mantle would be a last choice on their menu.

More information on how to deter, including a list of deer resistant plants, and how to attract deer to your property ...

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Ideas for Garden Design

If you are an avid gardener, you (like me) surely have a plethora of beloved plants that you just couldn't resist bringing home from the garden market – even though you had no clue where you were going to plant them! And that's ok. It's your garden, after all.

However, if you have just purchased a new home or want to “clean up” your existing landscape, it would be helpful to have an understanding of good garden design principles.

First of all, you need to define the qualities of your landscape so you know what you are working with. How does the rainwater move through the yard? Does it drain away relatively quickly or is the space in need of rerouting water flows? What is the soil like? Does it have too much pH? Is it rocky, sandy, or too compact? Is it hilly or flat? What is the climate like? Are there pockets of warmer areas in the winter? Are there sections that are in the blazing hot sun in the summer? Does the wind blast through areas? Are there natural features that you want to save and even enhance? How will you balance color and texture?

Next, how do you want to use this area? Where will you locate trash cans and yard equipment? Where should the pathways lead? Is it a public or private space, and do you want to change this? Where is lighting needed? (see below)

And, finally, consider the principles of design. Balance, scale, rhythm, and unity are all important components of a well-designed garden. Consider adding a focal point which draws you into the garden.

More on landscaping for seasonal interest, to meet family needs, for good “Chi,” and for energy savings ...

Ideas for Maintaining a Garden

“Low Maintenance” is the mantra of many of today’s gardeners. With busy schedules or declining stamina, we are all seeking the perfect garden that grows happily with little intervention on our part. Of course, one can select lower maintenance plants by using natives or cultivars demonstrated to grow well in our area, but no plant is totally without maintenance. Annuals bloom all summer long but require deadheading and last for only a single season, requiring the time and expense of replanting. Perennials bloom beautifully for a short period of time but die back in the winter, necessitating thinning and removal of dead top growth. Shrubs and trees require the least maintenance but still need to be watered while getting established and must be pruned and leaves raked in the fall. All plants require sufficient water and do best with fertilizer and situated in an location ideal for their growing requirements. And, of course, all plants are subject to getting insects and disease if conditions are right.

Feeding Your Garden

Both garden and container grown plants need fertilizer to produce healthy foliage and blooms. A slow-release fertilizer lasts for several months and feeds the plants gradually. Alternatively, a water-soluble fertilizer may produce quick results, but it is soon diminished and requires frequent applications. Organic fertilizers are recommended over chemical fertilizers since they work together with the natural microorganisms found in soil to break them down and to release the essential nutrients.

The best approach to determining your soil’s nutritional deficits is to have it tested every three years. Soil tests determine the basic nutrients available in the soil and gives recommendations for amendments such as lime and fertilizer.

More on mulch, water, controlling plant disease and insects, and container maintenance ...

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✿ Ideas for Sustainable Landscape ✿



It's an undisputed fact that most large consumers of carbon, a major contributor to global climate change, are industry, transportation, energy production and housing. So how can the lowly gardener really make a difference? Our efforts can feel futile when reading such reports as the one produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which states that the impacts of climate change will take "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented

changes in all aspects of society" unless global temperature increases are kept below the threshold of 1.5°C. And we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change from such events as destructive wildfires and flooding.

We must, however, keep in mind that every little bit helps. And that "help" starts at home with our daily habits and our individual consumption patterns. To accomplish this from a gardening perspective, can you envision your garden functioning in a way that completely mimics nature?

More in recommended practices for sustainable landscaping ...