

# ORGANIC GARDENS *TODAY*

FALL 2012

Volume 2, Issue 3



Compost Basics

Pain-Free Gardening

Farm Aid 2012 Review

And Much More.....



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## FALL 2012



Colchicum "Waterlily" is a wonderful surprise in the Fall garden.

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# From The Editor

Welcome to the Fall edition of *Organic Gardens Today!*

Although fall is a pleasant reprieve from the heat of the summer, the stark reality that our gardening year is coming to a close hits us right between the eyes. All of a sudden instead of enjoying all of the beauty of our landscapes and production in our vegetable gardens, we start back in the hectic cycle of cleaning, planting and last minute planning for next spring with our recent purchases from garden centers who are offering spectacular discounts at the end of the gardening season. There is one thing we all have to remember not only in fall, but also year round; Take a few minutes out to enjoy gardening and being one with nature. Enjoy the smells of leaves, freshly cut grass, the last minute blooms of roses and other flowers, and especially the joy of being with family members in this season. When my children were small I use to love making the piles of leaves and watching them dive into them with smiles from ear to ear and laughter filling the air. Time passes but the memories remain fresh in my mind, and this year I will teach this joy to my grandson Aiden, so the tradition continues.....



Starting with this issue you will be able to download *Organic Gardens Today* on your I-pad, I-phone, or any mobile device and reader via Magzter.com for a nominal fee. You will also be able to download the FREE app for *OGT* so you will be notified when the new issue is released. Partnering with Magzter will help expand our audience and be available for those with mobile devices and readers. No matter where you are, you will be able to read *OGT* “on the go” or show it to a friend or colleague without lugging your laptop. Technology can be a wonderful thing sometimes. Also starting next spring *OGT* will be available as a professionally-printed magazine delivered to your mailbox. For questions about this new service, please send an email to [subscriptions@organicgardentoday.com](mailto:subscriptions@organicgardentoday.com).

If you like what we have accomplished with *Organic Gardens Today*, please share us with your family, friends, coworkers and fellow gardeners. We rely on word of mouth to spread the word about the magazine, and I thank you in advance for supporting us. The more you spread the word, the more writers will want to be part of this new creation, meaning even more information for you, our reader.

Enjoy the colors and cooler weather of fall and we will see you in December!

David Daehnke, Editor

## MEET OUR WRITERS



### DAVID DAEHNKE, THE GARDENING GURU, EDITOR

David is a seasoned gardener and lecturer, helping both the novice and experienced gardener. His fun and informative lectures are widely requested throughout the Northeast. Over the past 12 years, David has successfully managed three public gardens as Executive Director, but his true love is communicating proper gardening practices and creating gardens of beauty. He received his B.S. Degree in 1984 in Ornamental Horticulture at Delaware Valley College. David is widely known from his radio show "The Gardening Guru" on WGHT 1500 AM, and can also be heard monthly on Martha Stewart's Sirius Radio program "Morning Living with Betsy Karetnick". He is a horticultural consultant on his Internet Web page, [www.thegardeningguru.com](http://www.thegardeningguru.com). Contact David through his web site for current lecture schedule and to make arrangements for your own presentation.



### SUZANNE VANOVER

Suzanne VanOver has always had a passion for plants. By the age of three, she could identify every vegetable by its leaf in her uncle's garden where she spent a majority of her childhood. This ignited a curiosity that has followed her throughout her life and career. Her home gardens are filled with plants from both grandmothers and many family members and friends who have shared with her along the way. After becoming a massage therapist over ten years ago, her attraction to the plant kingdom lead her along nature's path to the use essential oils for health and wellness. She regularly hold Wellness Workshops, educating about a variety of ways to incorporate essential oils into our daily lives. Suzanne has always called New Jersey her home where she is raising her three teenage boys with her husband, Bill.



### CLAUDIA DE YONG

Claudia came to gardening as a career late in life although she has always had a passion for plants and design. The year her father passed away in 2002, she was asked to design a show garden at Hampton Court Flower Show and won her first RHS medal. Since then she has designed 5 further show gardens winning Gold and Tudor Rose for Best in Show. Claudia has designed and built many private gardens all over England, many with water features from ponds and lakes to streams. Her style is more Romantic and loves sourcing craftsman made products. Claudia loves to travel and find small specialist nurseries.



### AL BENNER

Married to Deena Seligsohn Benner. Twin boys - Owen and Coleman 6 years old. Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at LaSalle University. Owner of three web businesses:

[www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com](http://www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com), [www.BackyardFarmers.com](http://www.BackyardFarmers.com), [www.MossAcres.com](http://www.MossAcres.com), [www.PurrfectFence.com](http://www.PurrfectFence.com). A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - [www.FincaLasBrisas.org](http://www.FincaLasBrisas.org). Founder of [www.BennersGardens.com](http://www.BennersGardens.com) - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.

## MEET OUR WRITERS

### MAUREEN FARMER

Maureen is creator of The Farmer's Garden web site. This web site is a surplus garden produce exchange where you can buy, sell, trade, or give away your excess backyard produce.

<http://www.thefarmersgarden.com>. She is also on the Board of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in New Britain, Connecticut.



### LAURA TAYLOR

Laura Taylor is passionate about organic vegetable growing at her home in the in The San Fernando Valley. She sowed her first vegetable patch over 17 years ago with a variety of summer vegetables. With each spring Laura found herself creating additional garden spaces to accommodate her growing obsession with home grown vegetables and tomatoes.

Laura now grows a riot of season vegetables along with over 90 varieties of tomatoes. She brings her passion for growing, cooking, teaching and bringing people together through her company, Tomato Matters. She has become a hub for education, inspiration and encouragement for inspired living and enjoying home growing, culinary arts and entertaining. Classes are offered in topics related to growing vegetables, cooking and needle arts. In addition, Laura has created a line of tomato-themed stationery as well as authored and self-published Tomato Calendar and Growing Guide. The 2013 Tomato Calendar and Growing Guide will soon be available through Laura's website, [www.TomatoMatters.com](http://www.TomatoMatters.com)

## Organic Gardens Today Magazine is Looking for Writers



Are you a gardening 'expert' that would like to write for us and help share the organic principles the magazine conveys? Whether you have a gardening degree from a college or you are "dirt" educated, send me an e-mail with the subject and article you want to cover. I will review and see if we can use it in the next issue. Please remember that the magazine will be online on or about the first day of the new season, so please address your article for the upcoming season and make sure it is sent at least two weeks before the publication date for formatting.

Send your requests to [editor@organicgardentoday.com](mailto:editor@organicgardentoday.com)

We look forward to hearing from you!

# Home Grown Gardening Tips

## Gardening Tips For October

- \* Marigolds, calendulas, and nasturtiums may be dug up and planted in pots and brought inside for indoor blooming.
- \* Take in houseplants promptly, repotting them if needed in a good compost mix. Move them in stages as not to stress them during the transition.
- \* Give evergreens, rhododendrons and newly set out perennials a thorough soaking of water, but do not water newly planted bulbs.
- \* Amaryllis plants that have been growing outside all Summer should be allowed to dry out (their dormancy period) then placed in a dark place until the new growth starts.
- \* Tulip planting may be started as soon as the bulbs arrive, although mid-October is early enough.
- \* Bulbs planted this month should be mulched lightly, but not until after the ground freezes.
- \* All roots and bulbs that need Winter storage, such as dahlias, tuberous rooted begonias, caladiums, cannas and gladioli, need to be taken in when the frost has cut the tops down.
- \* When they gourds have dried, they should be washed and then may be painted, waxed or decorated to suit your needs.
- \* For early Spring blooms in the garden or rock garden, plant Winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*. The yellow buttercup-like blossoms will open two weeks ahead of crocuses.
- \* Warm season ornamental grasses are in full bloom at this time of year. Note which ones you like now for Spring planting.
- \* Cull apples and wormy fruits that are lying under the trees. Dispose of these in your trash, not your compost, to get rid of insects and diseases next year.

\* All trees and shrubs should receive plenty of moisture before the ground freezes.

\* Make sure to start your own compost pile this season. Don't waste the leaves, recycle them into compost!

## Gardening Tips For November

- \* Finish planting tulips, at least in the northern part of the country.
- \* All classes of rose bushes can be set out in the next few weeks. Plant them with the "knuckle" an inch or two below the ground. Protect the roots from drying before planting, and water well once they are planted.
- \* Work a trowel full of bone meal around old rose bushes before they are covered for the winter.
- \* After the hardy chrysanthemums are through flowering, most gardeners cut them back to within a few inches of the ground, but you can also leave them standing for winter interest.
- \* Plant paper white narcissi about November 15 for bloom on Christmas Day. If there is not much sunshine in their growing location, they will bloom later.
- \* You can put a little covering on the perennial beds if the ground freezes hard. If the ground is not frozen, wait until December.
- \* Clean away all dead foliage from around the rose bushes and hill the soil around tender types such as hybrid teas and polyanthas.
- \* Hyacinths to be forced should be potted by the end of November. Be sure that the soil is well soaked before they go into the cellar; otherwise the roots will not start to grow. An occasional watering may be needed, so keep a watchful eye on them.

## Home Grown Gardening Tips (continued)

- \* Clean all foliage from around peonies and delphiniums where disease has been present to help prevent the disease from reoccurring next year.
- \* Garden ferns are readily divided and transplanted at this time of year.
- \* Lift tender summer perennials from the garden and store in peat moss in the cellar.
- \* For successional tulip blooms next spring, you can plant the bulbs at different levels in the soil.
- \* The flavor of parsnips is improved by letting the roots stay in the ground until spring.
- \* A surface application of composted cow manure around rhubarb will help keep older plants producing.
- \* The vegetable garden should be turned over in the fall, especially before a cold night, to freeze any hibernating insects.
- \* The strawberry bed should be covered with straw, pine needles, or peat moss once the ground has frozen.
- \* Raspberry plantings will also benefit from an application of composted cow manure at this time.
- \* Clean up all diseased and insect infested foliage and fruit from the garden to prevent further spread next year.
- \* There is still time to move and set out deciduous trees and shrubs, but it is too late for evergreens.
- \* On warm days, give another thorough soaking to rhododendrons and newly set evergreens.
- \* Remember that evergreens will still lose moisture during the winter months from those evergreen leaves. An application of an anti-desiccant will help slow this down.
- \* Do not allow your lawn to go into winter with too much top growth. Two inches is plenty; more can facilitate such diseases as pink and gray snow mold (*Fusarium nivale* and *Typhula incarnata*).
- \* Get cold frames ready now so they can be started first thing in spring.
- \* It is a good idea to check your mower before setting it to rest for the winter. Clean the underside of the deck, sharpen the blade, and change the oil and air filter. In spring change the spark plug (making sure the gap is correct) and you will be ready for the first cut of the new growing season.
- \* Store garden furniture and clean all tools of soil and plant material. Coat all metal parts with a light coating of oil to keep them from rusting.

### Gardening Tips For December

- \* Amaryllis bulbs may be started now. If they are established bulbs in old pots, two inches of soil should be removed from the surface and replaced with a good, rich mixture.
- \* Make sure the pots of forcing bulbs are full of roots before moving into sunlight, and make sure they are watered adequately for the best display.
- \* Remember to set out your Christmas tree when the season is over for winter protection for the birds.
- \* If you have brought in geraniums for winter color, they must be placed in a window that receives direct sunlight all day and a daytime temperature of 70 to 75 degrees is maintained. Keep in mind geraniums do not like to be over watered.
- \* Never apply water to houseplants late in the afternoon. The foliage should not be wet when night comes.
- \* Be sure that all garden refuse that may contain any insects or disease is disposed of in the garbage and not the compost pile.

# Pain-Free Gardening, The Way Nature Intended

By Suzanne VanOver

Our gardens become an extension of our home, a personal space where we escape the rest of the world ... just digging our hands into the soil grounds us and connects to the earth; the hint of lilac blooming the air can make us turn our heads searching for more; the taste of a warm tomato fresh off the vine might transport us to a time in our childhood ... these are all things that touch us at our core. They speak to something deep inside us and bring us satisfaction and peace. It's no wonder that plants not only touch us emotionally, but these plants have the ability to effect us on a physical level, as well.

As gardeners, we know that maintaining these plots of land can sometimes be very physical. Turning over the soil, pulling weeds, deadheading, harvesting crops ... leave us with a sense of accomplishment, but can also leave our hands cramped, our knees aching and our back throbbing. All a labor of love, we admit, but nonetheless we sometimes find ourselves reaching for a bottle of something that will give us relief. The use of pure essential oils made from organically-grown plants is becoming an increasingly common means of treatment for pain and inflammation.



It all comes down to science ~ each plant contains a variety of chemical compounds. When tested in a laboratory, scientists are able to determine what chemicals are prevalent and how the essential oil derived from that plant can help us. For instance, basil contains a chemical known to be anti-inflammatory and muscle relaxant, whereas lavender carries analgesic and antiseptic properties.



So why can't we just pluck these from our garden and rub them on our sore spots? Again, because there is science and the way in which the essential oils are separated from the plant matter. It involves picking them at the peak of their chemical potency, resting them for the proper amount of time and distilling them at the optimal temperature. It also involves isolating the essential oil from the water that the steam created during distillation, filtering and properly bottling it. So I leave it up to the professionals who understand the process, who grow their plants organically, who have the proper equipment to give me what I need to feel better ~ which is why I only use Young Living Essential Oils. With farms around the globe and partner growers, I feel confident that I am getting the purest, most potent natural products that help bring my body the relief I expect. Hope you like your new gardening tools!

## Pain and Inflammation-Relieving Essential Oils and Products

Most oils can be put directly on the skin or directly onto the area when you are feeling discomfort, but following the instructions on the bottle will guide you as to the proper use.

### SINGLE ESSENTIAL OILS

**BLACK PEPPER:** Black Pepper works by increasing energy and cellular oxygenation. It has anti-inflammatory qualities.

**CLOVE:** Most anti-microbial and antiseptic of all essential oils. Also anti-fungal, antiviral and anti-bacterial.

**COPAIBA:** South American oil for aiding digestion and supporting the body's natural response to injury or irritation. When used with other essential oils, copaiba magnifies their effects.

**HELICHRYSUM:** Works to regenerate tissue and nerves and to improve circulation.

**HYSSOP:** Has anti-inflammatory and anti-infectious qualities.

**IDAHO BALSAM FIR:** Traditionally used for muscular aches and pains. Soothes and rejuvenates body and mind.

**IDAHO BLUE SPRUCE:** Highly anti-inflammatory pain reliever.

**PEPPERMINT:** An aid in pain management, such as headaches and muscle soreness.

**WINTERGREEN:** 98% methyl salicylate (e.g. relieves pain and inflammation, behaves like cortisone.) Beneficial for bone, muscle & joint discomfort, contains the same active ingredient (methyl salicylate) as birch and is beneficial in massage for soothing head tension and muscles after exercising.

## Essential Oil Blends

**PANAWAY** (wintergreen, clove, helichrysum, peppermint): It helps reduce inflammation, increasing circulation and healing, thus reducing pain. Many people have had relief from arthritis symptoms, sports injuries, sprains, muscle spasms, bumps and bruises.

**RELIEVE IT** (spruce, hyssop, black pepper, peppermint): This blend contains high anti-inflammatory compounds to relieve deep tissue pain. It helps to calm the nerves and alleviates skin and muscle soreness.

**DEEP RELIEF ROLL-ON** (peppermint, Idaho balsam fir, clove, vetiver, wintergreen, lemon, helichrysum, copaiba): Super blend of oils that are known for their long-lasting benefits of relieving pain, inflammation, and muscle tension.

Supplements made with essential oils are a very effective tool in relieving body soreness and pain. The best organic vitamin supplements that you can find in a health food store or on the internet are absorbed into our bodies at a rate of between 35-45% in 24 hours; however, because our bodies are so synergistic with plants, supplements made with plant-derived essential oils are absorbed between 75-85% in just one hour!



Supplements made with essential oils are a very effective tool in relieving body soreness and pain. The best organic vitamin supplements that you can find in a health food store or on the internet are absorbed into our bodies at a rate of between 35-45% in 24 hours; however, because our bodies are so synergistic with plants, supplements made with plant-derived essential oils are absorbed between 75-85% in just one hour!

**BLM** - A high-powered arthritis treatment that includes essential oils and a special collagen complex for building bones, ligaments and muscles. The exclusive collagen and hyaluronic acid blend strengthens and rebuilds damaged joints and cartilage, as it combats arthritis inflammation and pain. The powder adds two additional essential oils that fight bacteria and xylitol that strengthens bone.

**SULFURZYME** - Young Living's MSM, a natural form of sulfur. MSM is a safe and natural solution for many inflammatory conditions, including

tendonitis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, fibromyalgia, Scleroderma, back pain, asthma and allergies. While MSM is not a cure for these diseases, it may help to alleviate inflammation and some of the symptoms they cause. MSM is a natural pain reliever and analgesic. It helps reduce inflammation, muscle spasms and scar tissue. MSM dilates blood vessels and increases blood flow.

For more information, you can check out Suzanne's website at: [www.suzannevanover.com](http://www.suzannevanover.com)  
You can also become a Facebook friend at: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002085192356>, to see Suzanne's daily tips on using essential oils in your life!



## Suzanne VanOver

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Facebook: Essential Oils



Individual Health Consultations  
Home Oil Gatherings  
Educational Workshops

~ *Better Living through Nature's Gifts* ~

# How Much Do We Take Our Parks For Granted In Cities?

By Claudia deYong

London in particular is blessed with wonderful parks, all tended and cared for by dedicated teams of gardeners. The parks are a welcome break from the traffic fumes and hustle of the streets, provide exercise for our four legged friends, stage concerts and events, have ponds and lakes which provide habitats for bird life and other small mammals, recreation areas for children and tennis courts amongst other activities that take place.



Having just returned from New York in the sweltering heat of Summer ( yes they have a summer there!), I took a walk round some of Central Park in areas I had never visited before and was quite amazed by the contrast of landscape that it offers let alone the wildlife. In one area I felt I could almost be in the the Canadian Rockies- well not quite, but the views were quite spectacular. I saw the most amazing red bird, a Cardinal feeding it's young and wonderful Crape Myrtle trees in full pink bloom.

The park was buzzing with activity, round every corner there seemed to be a Japanese Bride having pictures taken! I kept thinking it was the same bride however, there was a different groom each time!

The park breathes life into a very busy city and a free concert was taking place on one side, boating

on another, people jogging, or walking just enjoying the scenery. This park is more than a green space , it offers activities that bring communities together and refreshes the soul. It helps people connect with the landscape and increase their awareness of it.

In another part of town, I am not sure you can call the High Line a park but this old disused railway has brought life and greenery to an otherwise smelly run down area of the city. People stroll through lovely prairie style planting high up away from the traffic below, relax on recliners built into the structure. Lay on grassy areas, sip coffee at little bistro tables dotted around the place whilst the sound of birds and crickets help to drown out the car horns. Water gently flows in some areas which refreshes tired feet.

Indeed, having parks that people can enjoy in cities is vital for regenerating areas and attracting the public to connect with a district. Nature is a great way of bringing communities together and we should value them and encourage councils to preserve and create more. We should also value those that keep them looking good for us to enjoy. Without parks, cities would be lacking any soul and be a lot worse off.

*Claudia came to gardening as a career late in life although she has always had a passion for plants and design. The year her father passed away in 2002, she was asked to design a show garden at Hampton Court Flower Show and won her first RHS medal. Since then she has designed 5 further show gardens winning Gold and Tudor Rose for Best in Show. Claudia has designed and built many private gardens all over England, many with water features from ponds and lakes to streams. Her style is more Romantic and loves sourcing craftsman made products. Claudia loves to travel and find small specialist nurseries. Visit her web site at [www.claudiadeyong.com](http://www.claudiadeyong.com)*

# Composting Basics

By David Daehnke

So many leaves, so little time! As pretty as the fall leaf season can be, it is even tougher when the colors fade and the leaves are piled up on your lawn. Personally, I cannot believe that October is almost here. The crisp weather has visited my garden, and although a heavy frost has yet to appear, my garden has begun to fade, and personally, so have I. That may be why I dread the leaf drop so much.... my energy levels are low from a productive summer. They are predicting a wonderful showing of leaf color due to the abundance of moisture, and I do enjoy the show very much. My terror lies in cleaning the piles of white oak leaves (which also tend to hang on the tree to the bitter end) that cover my ½ acre of property. My property lies back off of the road about 200 yards and it is nearly impossible to haul the leaves out to the street for the town sponsored leaf pick-up. My fall job is to **USE** these fall leaves to my advantage as well as my soil's advantage. I do have a compost pile that has been working very efficiently for the past 15 years, especially since I try to collect most of the leaves by using my rear-bagging mower. As any compost person knows, the key to a successful compost pile is the mixture of carbon to nitrogen. But before I get too ahead of myself, let's start with the basics.

## The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

I receive so many questions about composting on my website that I wanted to cover the proper techniques to help you reap the benefit of "Black Gold". So many gardeners complain that their compost either "stinks" or is doing nothing. Both of these say that the proper ratio of carbon to nitrogen is not being held. Usually for an active, healthy compost pile to work efficiently you need an average of 2 to 3 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen. A "part" is any unit of measure that works for you. It could be a five gallon bucket or a shovel full, just so long as you are consistent. Also the smaller the pieces, the quicker decomposition will occur.



Items included in the carbon category are fall leaves, hay and wood chips or shavings, are high in carbon, little nitrogen, and are very slow to decompose when left by themselves. Nitrogen items include grass clippings, kitchen scraps (no animal products - they will draw animals!) and manure are high in nitrogen, low in carbon and decompose very quickly on their own. When a compost pile sits there and stares at you, it means there is not enough nitrogen material in the pile. When it begins to smell to high heaven, that means there is not enough carbon materials in the mix. Both of these problems can be adjusted to compensate for the respective problem, but the key is to mix in the missing product without over doing it.

Just as important as the ratio is aerating the pile. Not only do you want to have air enter the pile, but you want to make sure that the microbes that are breaking down the materials have air. There are two types of microbes: Aerobic (that use oxygen to help break down the materials) and Anaerobic (that uses fermentation and little air to break down the pile). Anaerobic decomposition produces foul odors and creates acids and alcohol that is harmful to plants. Aerating the pile helps cut down on the smell, but adding leaves or hay will make a quicker difference.

As funny as it may sound, your compost pile needs moisture. Wetting the pile down with your hose will keep the environment inside your compost pile moist, but avoid over saturating the pile as this can lead to a foul odor.

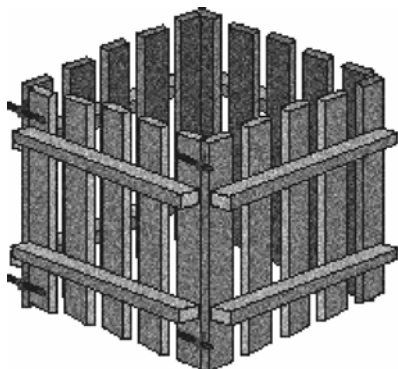
## The Process

For the decomposition process to begin, we talked about having 2 to 3 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen. The smaller the pieces, the faster the decomposition will occur. When the leaves begin to fall, bag your leaves along with your grass clippings. When mowing and you will have a perfectly mixed, smaller size material for your pile. It doesn't get any easier. When you are done mowing, and if there isn't any rain forecasted for the next few days, you can water your compost. The best kept secret of composting is to sprinkle some soil from your property into and on your compost pile. Your garden soil contains the beneficial bacteria and microorganisms that will begin the breaking down process. Within a few short weeks you will notice two things happening: On cold mornings there will be steam rising from the pile, and you will be able to notice the pile shrinking in size. These are the signs that your compost pile is hard at work.

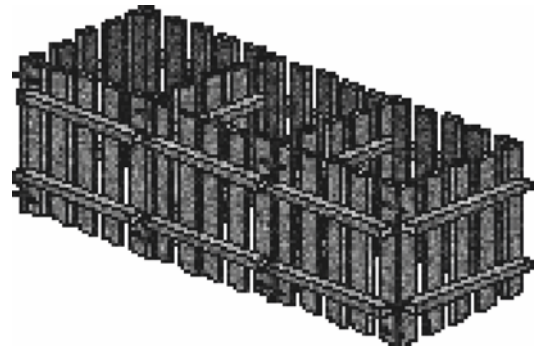
## Piles or Bins, Which is Better?

This can be simply answered by determining the size of your property. If you have the space in a back corner of your property to hold the creation of a pile, then go for it. If you have a smaller property where space is limited, then a compost bin is for you. Many municipalities will give a compost bin to the residents to help reduce the amount of garbage that has to be picked up and paid for through your tax dollar. As much as 20% of residential waste is green waste, or material that can be composted. If your town does not do this, encourage them to start.

The other alternative to buying a compost bin is to build your own. One of the easiest and most accessible items you can use to build your own compost bin is wooden pallets. Many businesses receive ship-



ments on pallets and then have a hard time disposing of them and simply throw them out, adding to our landfills. Please keep one thing in mind: Do not get pallets from businesses that carry chemicals. You may never know if some of those chemicals leaked onto the pallet and the chemicals may leach into your compost. With pallets if you find that you can fill a whole bin quite quickly, you can just add another section very easily.



## The Final Product

Reducing waste is a great reason to begin composting, but the best reason, especially for us gardeners is the final product from the process: COMPOST! Otherwise known in the gardening community as "Black Gold", this nutrient and microbial-rich medium will give any plant a head start in spring as well as improve the condition of the soil. If you have sandy soil, adding compost will help improve the moisture holding capacity. If you have a clay soil, compost will help improve the drainage by creating larger particle spaces allowing water to drain through. Not only will your soils' moisture capacity improve, but your plants will be receiving the nutrients Mother Nature wants them to receive it, the slow, natural organic way. For yours and your gardens benefit, get outside and get your compost bins going. Your gardens will benefit for years to come!

*David Daehnke is widely known as "The Gardening Guru" and can be heard on WGHT 1500 AM ([www.ghtradio.com](http://www.ghtradio.com)). David is also available for lectures. Please visit his web site, [www.thegardeningguru.com](http://www.thegardeningguru.com) for more useful organic gardening information.*

# Plant a Row For The Hungry<sup>SM</sup>

Garden Writers Association Foundation

[www.gardenwriters.org](http://www.gardenwriters.org)

Call Toll Free (877) 492-2727



There is only ONE Gardening Guru, David Daehnke!

David has over 25 years of experience in the horticulture field, from running his own landscaping business, Executive Director of three botanical gardens, and having his own radio show for 18 years.

He wants you to be the best gardener you can, teaching simple, smart, organic gardening practices which are safe to you, your family, your pets and OUR environment. David is a well-renowned speaker, lecturing to garden clubs, civic organizations and businesses with a fun and informative style. To schedule David for your next event or visit to learn more about safe organic gardening practices, visit his web site at:

[www.thegardeningguru.com](http://www.thegardeningguru.com)

# In it for the “green”...

By Al Benner

The color green is proven to have a soothing and therapeutic effect on humans. Just having a view of a garden helps patients heal significantly faster in hospitals. Just visualize walking along a moss-covered path in a pine forest with a waterfall off to one side, and you get the idea.

As someone who has been around plants and the outdoors all my life, I have experienced this soothing effect in many ways throughout my life. Having an undergraduate degree in ornamental horticulture and being the son of a professor in this field, my entrepreneurial path has been influenced since an early age by the outdoors, and as a result my businesses relate directly. I have found that when my entrepreneurial path coincides most closely to plant/outdoor-related experiences, that I am by far happiest and less stressed.



Having grown up in the northern suburbs of Philadelphia (New Hope, Bucks County), I was very active in my childhood in the “green industry”, starting with my own vegetable stand when I was twelve, running a landscaping business, and then working as a landscape designer and sales manager. By the time I turned thirty I had started a business offering deer fencing to home gardeners and landscapers to keep the deer out. That company grew to several million in sales and was sold a few years ago.

During the past ten years I have started other ventures focused directly around my affinity for na-

ture, horticulture, and most recently, farming. These include a 150 acre residential eco-community in Costa Rica ([FincaLasBrisas.org](http://FincaLasBrisas.org)), a moss supply business that offers live moss for shade gardening projects ([MossAcres.com](http://MossAcres.com)), and most recently, a 50 acre organic farm in Northeastern Pennsylvania ([OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com](http://OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com)).

What I have experienced with all of these businesses is that getting outside and involved hands on with the various projects really helps reduce stress and is simultaneously very energizing. From traveling to Costa Rica to help with the planting of fruit trees, to experimenting with moss growing methods, to pruning the orchard at the farm, all these activities become part of my lifestyle, and they are directly tied to businesses I own.

When one hears about how important it is to do something you enjoy and are passionate about, I can't agree more regarding just how important this has been for me.

As the father of twin six year old boys, the businesses and associated properties they operate from have also opened up a vast science laboratory of learning opportunities and endless fun for our boys.

Sure I could make more money if I spent more time in the office, but in the end, the great outdoors and the quality of life it brings me and my family trumps the “green” I might be making more of if I chose to let that be my primary driver. Having a very supportive wife helps also - Thanks Deena !

*Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at LaSalle University. Owner of three web businesses: [www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com](http://www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com) [www.BackyardFarmers.com](http://www.BackyardFarmers.com) [www.MossAcres.com](http://www.MossAcres.com) [www.PurrfectFence.com](http://www.PurrfectFence.com) A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - [www.FincaLasBrisas.org](http://www.FincaLasBrisas.org) Founder of [www.BennersGardens.com](http://www.BennersGardens.com) - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.*

# Looking Back to Plan Ahead

By Laura Taylor

Extreme heat for four straight weeks has taken its toll...it was just too much for the tomato plants so I'm declaring tomato season officially over, but definitely not forgotten. There's a lot to re-visit and consider for next year. I want to do that while it's all fresh in my mind and I can still read my chicken scratch garden notes.

My system for planning from one season to the next isn't scientific. It's really about common sense and organization. It's about knowing what worked and what didn't and using that as a jumping off point. The fact is, every growing season is different. While there's a lot we can do to nurture a good crop every year, nature plays a big part in the process. We can't control that so we have to be open to possibilities and variables that we cannot anticipate.

It's so important to keep some kind of garden journal. This is where I record everything that goes on in the garden. I include a map of my garden beds noting every variety and the location of each. Really helpful is the page for the specific tomato varieties. Here, I keep track of where I bought the plant or if I grew it from seed. If the answer is from seed, where did the seed come from? I note the planting date and the date I began harvesting from it.



My notes remind me that I had drainage issues in two of the raised beds. No matter how slowly I

dripped the water, the water seemed to flow right through. The tomatoes in those beds didn't grow as vigorously as they should have because the water and nutrition never made it to the roots of the plants. Quick drainage will be okay for the fall veggies, but I will definitely have to re-work the soil in those beds for the next tomato season.



I'm also reminded that the tomatoes in containers all were over taken by spider mites. That had nothing to do with the containers and everything to do with the fact that the supports for the shade cloth that I use were too low and didn't allow for good air circulation around the plants. I'll need to devise a different structure to hold up the shade cloth long before spring.



There are always a couple of plants that I lose to wilt. It's crucial to know which ones didn't make it and where they were located. If the wilt was all in one bed (and it usually is) I may decide not to put tomatoes in there the next year.

Or, at the very least, I'll plant the varieties that are least susceptible to wilt. That would be a good place to plant grafted tomatoes. Note to self: how many grafted plants will fit in that bed...grafts need more room than conventionally grown tomatoes...they get huge.



I keep track of feeding, not only when I put down fertilizer at the soil line but also when I gave a foliar feed. If I used any kind of spray for insects or fungus, that's important to know and monitor. These aren't factors that play a part in planning for the next growing season, but still important to know. They keep me on task so I don't over feed or spray, which can be damaging to the plants.

Most important are the notes that I jot down about the fruit itself. Which plants yielded lots of fruit that tasted amazing? How was the texture? Could I use the fruit for the recipes that I wanted to make? Those are the biggest factors that I consider when deciding what to plant next year.



Of my 150 tomato plants about 100 will be old favorites from years past. I do plant duplicates of my very favorite varieties, like Pineapple and Black Zebra. The other 50 will be my new discoveries. This step is by far the most fun when looking ahead to the next season – tomato tastings! Attend as many as you can and if there isn't one in your locale, maybe you should be the one to start it. Get as many tomato growers together as possible and have them each bring labeled samples from their gardens. You'll get to taste many new varieties and some will be wonderful enough to add to your list for next year. The added bonus of tomato tastings and festivals is the community of tomato growers that attend. You'll learn a lot just by listening to other growers.

One of the most important things to do when planning ahead for the next growing season is looking back. First, relish in the memory of your bountiful season. Next, gather your facts. Then take the information you've gathered, make a wish for good luck and jump in!



*Laura has become a hub for education, inspiration and encouragement for inspired living and enjoying home growing, culinary arts and entertaining. Classes are offered in topics related to growing vegetables, cooking and needle arts. In addition, Laura has created a line of tomato-themed stationery as well as authored and self-published Tomato Calendar and Growing Guide. The 2013 Tomato Calendar and Growing Guide will soon be available through Laura's website, [www.TomatoMatters.com](http://www.TomatoMatters.com)*

# Autumn Garlic Planting

By Maureen Farmer

There are many varieties of garlic to choose from, but the most important feature is whether the garlic is softneck or hardneck. Softneck varieties are called soft because the entire above ground plant dies down, leaving only the bulb and flexible stems that are easy to braid. Hardneck garlics have a stiff stem in the center that produces a beautiful flower and then dries to a rigid stick that makes braiding impossible. Softneck garlic generally has a milder flavor and hardneck garlic stores better and often grows better in colder climates.

Purchase garlic cloves for planting from a local farmer's market or from a seed supplier. Plant garlic cloves in loose, very fertile soil around the time of your first predicted frost so that the cloves have time to grow roots, but not enough time for shoots to emerge. Carefully break apart garlic bulbs and insert individual firm cloves root side down about two inches deep and six to eight inches apart. Do not plant cloves that have dried out or have mold growing on them. Separate the garlic cloves as close to planting time as possible to prevent the root nodules from drying out. Mulch the bed with leaves or straw a few inches deep to lessen the effect of the soil freeze/thaw cycle. If green shoots emerge, add additional mulch to cover them. In the spring, remove the mulch when new shoots emerge above the mulch.

If you grow hardneck garlic, be sure to remove the

flowering scapes so that more energy will be available to make bulbs instead of flowers. The scapes are also edible, and taste best when they are about four to six inches long or has grown into a loop. You can also display them in a vase. If you wait until the tops are well developed, depending on variety, you will either get a head of tiny garlic grains or a clump of small round bulbs. The garlic grains can be used while in place of minced garlic in recipes. The small round bulbs, called topsets, can be planted to produce the garlic equivalent of scallions.



Garlic is ready to harvest when the lower leaves have turned brown and the top leaves are still green. Do not wait until all the leaves have turned brown since by that time the bulbs may have split and won't have the leaf sheathes needed to form the wrapper. The bulbs may have also developed fungus by then. Carefully loosen the soil and since garlic bruises easily, gingerly lift the bulbs out.

Do not remove the stems. Place the garlic in a single layer in a warm, but shady spot. Leave them there for a few weeks until the outer skin becomes papery. Then brush off any remaining dirt and clip off the roots. If you desire, you can braid the stems of softneck garlic for storage. Store your garlic out of the sun in a place where the temperature is between 55 and 70 degrees.



*Maureen Farmer is master gardener and the owner and creator of The Farmer's Garden website ([www.thefarmersgarden.com](http://www.thefarmersgarden.com)). The site is a free surplus garden exchange location where you can buy, sell, give away or trade your excess home-grown produce. She is an avid gardener and also a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.*

## Fall is for Planting...

... lettuce, spinach, arugula, mache, chard, broccoli raab, kale, peas, radishes, carrots, beets, turnips, cilantro, Asian greens, leeks, calendulas, violas, and more!

“Fall is for Planting” banners begin to sprout up in nursery sales yards when gardens are still wearing their summer colors. The intent is to encourage shoppers to buy and plant trees and shrubs, but vegetable and flower growers should take action as well. Start seeds in late summer to take advantage of the balmy days, cool nights, and warm soils of fall. To read about the Top Ten Fall Varieties to grow from seed, visit [www.ezfromseed.org](http://www.ezfromseed.org).

Imagine weeks, or even months of harvesting tender baby greens, sweet carrots, salad turnips, and



peas. Even in northern climates it is possible to grow fresh vegetables through late fall. Begin by checking seed packets for “days to maturity.” Add 14 days to the number on the packet and subtract the sum from your average first frost date. This is your seed starting date. In the

case of a spinach variety that matures in 40 days, for example, plan to sow seed 54 days (about 8 weeks) before the frost date.

Contrary to common fears, your garden will not come to a screeching halt with the first frost, but will carry on for weeks afterwards. Broccoli, kale, parsley, spinach, arugula, and turnips are just a few of the vegetables that continue to produce well into fall. Some, particularly root vegetables, respond to frosty nights by becoming even sweeter!

### Help seeds germinate

In early spring, cold soil often delays germination. In summer the problem is the opposite: hot soil can prevent certain seeds, particularly lettuce and spinach, from sprouting at all. Fortunately, there are easy workarounds:

- Start seeds indoors, or in containers placed in the shade, and transplant young seedlings into the garden.

- Sow seeds in the shade of taller plants such as corn or tomatoes to provide protection from the afternoon sun.

- Do what the Old Farmer’s Almanac recommends: Moisten the ground and lay down a bale of straw. A week later, the soil under the bale will be cooler by about 10°F.

### Extend the harvest

Compared to protecting tender greens from the blazing summer sun, getting your fall garden to soldier on through cold is a simple matter. A basic cold frame constructed with straw bales and old windows can shelter salad greens through early winter even in northern regions. Cool weather crops such as spinach, chard, Asian greens, kale, collards, broccoli raab, and Brussels sprouts need no protection at all to last until the first hard frost. In cold winter areas, cover carrots, beets, and parsnips with a layer of mulch, and harvest until the ground freezes. In regions where frosts are rare, fresh greens and sweet root vegetables can be enjoyed all winter long.

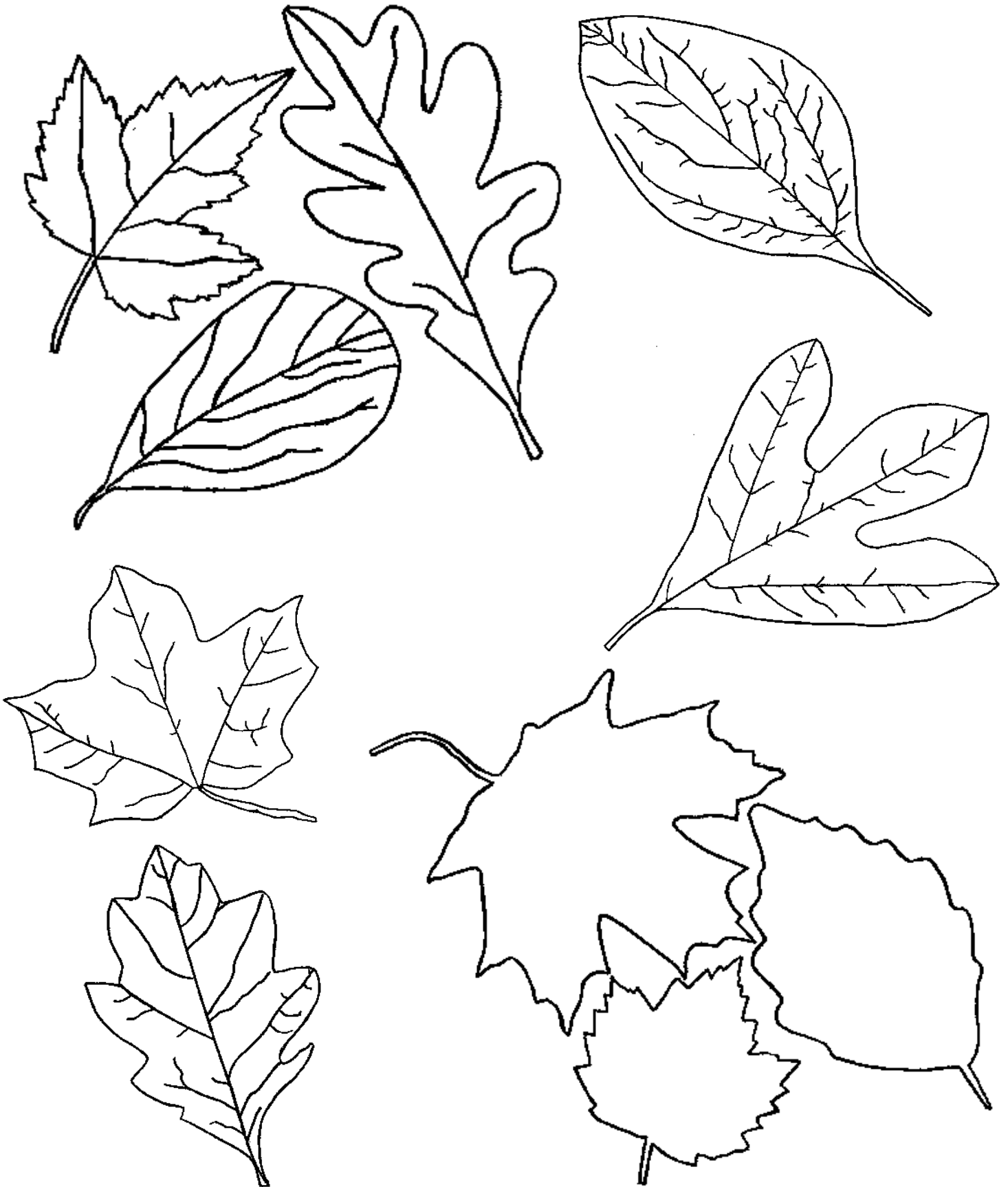
### Experiment!

If you’ve missed the date for late summer sowing, don’t despair. Some fall-sown seeds will germinate in fall and then go dormant. Others, depending on the vagaries of the weather, may germinate in late winter. Either way, the result can be a very early crop of succulent spring greens! Spinach and mache (also called corn salad) are excellent choices for fall sowing; cover young plants with straw when cold weather sets in, and they will come back to life in early spring. Other good candidates are arugula, beets, lettuce, and scallions.

*The EZfromSEED Web site shows you everything you need to know about growing plants from seed. It’s brought to you by the Home Garden Seed Association (HGSA), an international group of seed producers and seed packet companies committed to supporting home gardening success, specifically through the use of seeds.*

## FALL KID'S CORNER

Color the leaves with the colors of Fall - red, orange, yellow and brown





The farmers and fans were out in numbers on Saturday September 22 for farm aid 2012. When I told a few friends I was going I got the same response -- is that still going on? Yes it is, proud and strong for the 27th year and yes it is still bringing attention to the plight of American farmers. Not only are our farmers facing a drought of epic proportions this year, they are fighting to save their very existence against corporate take overs or being sued by Monsanto for illegally growing GMO crops. Sometimes we need to thank God that family farms are still around with how they are being treated. But that is why Farm Aid continues to have its yearly concert, to bring attention to this problem. Maybe it's because no TV station will cover this event live, which goes to show where their priorities are, that people wonder if farm aid is still around. Hopefully I will convince you to support farm aid and it's mission, but let's start in the beginning.

Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Mellencamp organized the first Farm Aid concert in 1985 near the height of the farm crisis to generate awareness about the loss of family farms and to raise funds to keep farm families on their land. Dave Matthews joined the Farm Aid Board of Directors in 2001. Farm Aid has raised more than \$39 million to promote a strong and resilient family farm system of

agriculture. Farm Aid is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep family farmers on their land in order to guarantee an agricultural system that ensures farmers a fair living, strengthens our communities, protects our natural resources and delivers good food for all. Farm Aid accomplishes this mission by:

### **Promoting Food from Family Farms**

We know that to keep family farmers on the land, we have to increase the number of people buying their good food. From their annual concert event that features family farm food and unites farmers, artists and concerned citizens, to inspiring and informative TV, radio, mail and web campaigns, they are building a powerful movement for good food from family farms. Farm Aid's [HOMEGROWN.org](http://HOMEGROWN.org) is an online community that enhances the relationship between family farmers and eaters through the shared experiences of growing food and participating in an agrarian life. [HOMEGROWN.org](http://HOMEGROWN.org) is part of Farm Aid's work to cultivate a greater demand for good food from family farmers and to link farmers and eaters together.

***"The consumer and the family farmer have to work together. If there is hope for the family farmers in America, then there is hope for America." — John Mellencamp***

## Growing the Good Food Movement

To help family farmers thrive, we have to expand markets for them, giving more people the opportunity to access family farm food.

Farm Aid fosters connections between farmers and eaters by growing and strengthening local and regional markets and working to get family farm food in urban neighborhoods, grocery stores, restaurants, schools and other public institutions. Farm Aid's recent report, *Rebuilding America's Economy with Family Farm-Centered Food Systems*, highlights innovative farmers and organizations working nationwide to build local and regional food systems.

## Helping Farmers Thrive

Since 1985, Farm Aid has answered 1-800-FARM-AID to provide immediate and effective support services to farm families in crisis. Now Farm Aid's online Farmer Resource Network connects farmers to an extensive network of close to 550 organizations across the country that help farmers find the resources they need to access new markets, transition to more sustainable and profitable farming practices, and survive natural disasters.

*"As long as someone has his hands in the dirt to measure the health of it, I feel like everything else will be okay. As long as there is good food coming to my table from a caring farmer, then I think everything else will be okay." — Dave Matthews*

## Taking Action to Change the System

Farm Aid works with local, regional and national organizations to promote fair farm policies and grassroots organizing campaigns designed to defend and bolster family farm-centered agriculture. We've worked side-by-side with farmers to protest factory farms and inform farmers and eaters about issues like genetically modified food and growth hormones. By strengthening the voices of family farmers, Farm Aid stands up for the most resourceful, heroic Americans — the family farmers who work the land. But farmers can't do this work alone; we all have a role to play in building a family farm food system that protects our farmers, our

communities, our planet and our health. Farm Aid's Action Center allows concerned citizens to become advocates for farm policy change.

## The Concert

Farm Aid continues to host an annual concert that raises funds to support Farm Aid's work to keep family farmers on the land and inspire people to choose family farmed food. When I heard in early summer Farm Aid was coming to Hershey, Pennsylvania, I made sure I was able to grab my tickets early. The last Farm Aid concert I went to was in 2006 at the Tweeter Center in Camden, New Jersey, and it was a fun event while teaching the principles that Farm Aid stands for.

*"You know, we're not big, we know we're small. We're David and Goliath; there's an army of Goliath against us, because of the money and the corporate structure that we're taking on...But we're still here, every year we come back. Farm Aid is a real thing, about protecting something that is sacred in this country." — Neil Young*

There were two things that really impressed me at Farm Aid: the local farmers from Pennsylvania who wanted the opportunity to talk to someone, anyone, who would listen to their story, and the Farm Yard, which had vendors and organizations who shared Farm Aid's belief. Sitting and chatting with a farmer who has had a family farm for three generations who now has to decide whether or not to sell because they just don't make enough money to survive tears a hole in your heart. They could sell their farm quickly to a corporation, but their belief in the American family farm holds them back. If you want to find someone that has high moral ethics, talk to a farmer. Some may question what the difference is between a family farmer and a corporate farmer is, and the answer is very clear. A family farmer grows the livestock and crops with tender care, while the corporation does not care about the process getting from point A to point B, just so long as they can do it as inexpensively as possible to make the greatest profit they can. Corporate farms use GMO (genetically modified organisms) that have been bred to resist the effects of

overhead spraying of chemicals such as Round-Up to control weeds. In the Winter edition of *OGT* we will be discussing the differences between heirloom seeds and GMO seeds. Please don't buy any seeds before reading this important article.

Organizations such as Label It, National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, Rodale Press, heirloom seed companies and many others, were there explaining the details of their organization as well as the benefit to everyday gardeners.

**"We started out to save the family farmer. Now it looks like the family farmer is going to save us." — Willie Nelson**

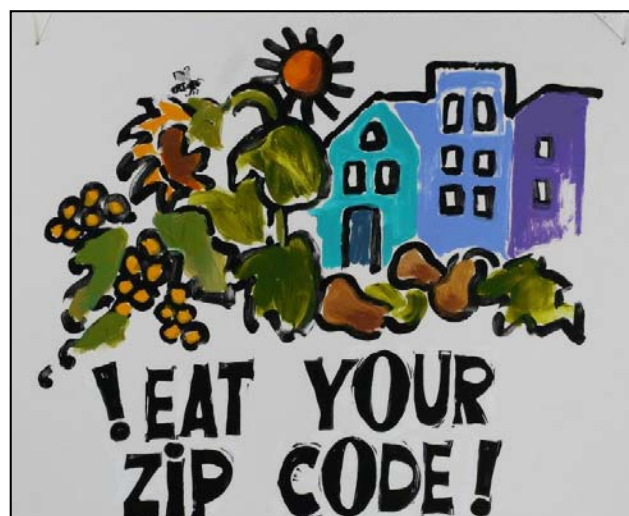
As for the concert, you couldn't find a better lineup anywhere. Living in the Tri-Sate area is difficult for someone who likes to hear Country music, if even only for a change. You either have to have Sirius/XM or an Internet radio station since there are no broadcast stations available. The lineup included:

Willie Nelson  
John Mellencamp  
Neil Young and Crazy Horse  
Dave Matthews with Tim Reynolds  
Kenny Chesney  
Jack Johnson  
Grace Potter & the Nocturnals  
Jamey Johnson  
ALO  
Pegi Young & The Survivors  
Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real  
Dale Watson  
Willie's special guests The Blackwood Quartet and The Bee Creek UMC Choir

What pleased me the most was the fact that each artist during their set would point out a particular subject and how each concert goer could make a positive effect in their everyday lives.

The only negative from this day was the actual venue itself. Hershey Park Stadium would be a

great venue for 15,000 people, but when 30,000 people come to an event it is a nightmare. There were simply too many people in the facility, not enough refreshments for them, and not enough security personnel to control the situation. Basically the venue was the only detriment of a truly spectacular event.



*Meaning know where your food is grown and eat from local farms!*

If you ever have the chance to see a Farm Aid concert, please do. You will learn a great deal from the Farm Yard and hear great music at the same time. Stop by their website [www.farmaid.org](http://www.farmaid.org) for more information and their [www.homegrown.org](http://www.homegrown.org) website for organic food tips.



*Many thanks to my wife and photographer extraordinaire, Kim Daehnke, for the photos for this article.*

# Re-Engineering Your Garden

Re-engineering is a popular buzz word today. Corporations use it to describe changes they are making in their market focus or their corporate structure. Basically, it means taking a look at where you are and reassessing what you can do to capitalize on what you have. And what holds true for established corporations surprisingly holds true for the established home garden.

As landscape matures, things change. Trees get taller and cast deeper shade, bushes outgrow their original compactness and places in the garden. People's lifestyles change, and that area given over to a sandbox or a swing set may no longer be needed. Or you may have purchased an older home with mature plantings that no longer work, or at least they don't satisfy you. The time comes in almost every landscape plan when "re-engineering" is the way to go.

## A Fresh Look

To start re-engineering a garden you have to take a hard, honest look at what you have. Because changes in the garden can happen subtly over years, you might overlook the obvious, such as an increase in shade or a physical change in your garden. For example, maybe you added a deck and now traffic patterns have changed, or you took down the swing set and the focal point of your garden is now in the wrong place, etc. Pretend you are the new owner of the house and garden you are surveying, and look at it with as much objectivity as you can.

## Back to the Drawing Board

Is there an orderly look to your garden, or has it just "happened" over time? Even "natural" gardens have a plan behind them that keeps them looking natural instead of wild. If there hasn't been a plan, this the place to start. Depending on the size of your garden and how elaborate you want to make it, you can plan it yourself or call on professional help. Even if you call on a professional, do have some plan in mind as to what you want your gar-

den to ultimately look like. Take one area at a time and think about how you want that to look, and then move on to the next area. If your garden doesn't naturally break into "areas," think about creating them by varying garden bed sizes, shapes and what plants they will contain. You may want to add a garden bed or two, or take some beds out.

A planned garden doesn't have to happen all at once. If you develop an overall plan, you can work on one or two areas at a time, and save work on other areas for later in the year or even until the next season or two.



## Dealing with Shade

In evaluating your existing garden, you may find that some plants don't perform as well as they used to. It could be that they need more light. Consider moving these to another area of the garden and finding new shade tolerant plants to replace them. Begonias, impatiens and other shade tolerant plants can give a bright show of color where petunias no longer perform well.

If you are uncertain about how well a plant will perform in a problem area, plant one or two plants of the types you would like there (in the ground or in a container) and test them for one season. Next time around, plant more of those that did well, and test some others for future plantings. Many gardeners annually try out "new" plants on a small scale before really committing any amount of time or money to them.

## Trees and Shrubs

One of the biggest changes that can creep up silently on a garden is the growth of trees and shrubs.

They not only grow taller and larger, but they can dramatically influence what can or can't grow under or around them. Trees can be trimmed professionally to thin out branches and allow more light to filter through to the ground. In extreme cases, such as too many trees planted too close together (or that somehow just grew there), removal of some of the trees in addition to trimming may be the answer. Professional advice and service from tree experts is highly recommended for trimming and removal.

Overgrown shrubs can also be trimmed back or removed entirely if no longer desirable. As much as it hurts emotionally and as much as it can be visually unattractive for a while, a severe trimming (almost to the ground) can often rejuvenate old and woody shrubs. Fall is often a good time to do severe trimming, because (in Northern areas, at least) the shrub may be "shutting down" for the winter, and will send up new shoots in the spring. Once they begin growing again you can control future shaping.

Plants planted around the base of a tree compete with the tree roots for water and nutrients. Creating raised beds for plants will reduce this competition, and can add a new feature to your garden. If raised beds are not practical or wanted, when planting under a tree or near its roots put the plants in pots and then sink the pots in holes around the tree. This, too, will reduce competition.

For specific recommendations, ask a landscape professional or check information in books at your local library. Your local agricultural or horticultural extension agent may also offer some advice.

### **Problem areas**

Almost every home has a problem area. Often it is the north side of the house, or a walkway along one side of the house, or an area behind the garage or a shed. Frequently, a simple cleanup is the first order of business. For example, once cleaned up, a dirt pathway can be spruced up with mulch or a layer of gravel and the addition of stepping

stones. A north wall that never gets any sun can be brightened with containers of shade plants grouped or lined along the way. If there is an overhang, hanging baskets can be used, or they can be hung from wrought iron hooks made for baskets. Alternating tall and short containers, and varying plant types and colors can turn a formerly drab area into a "secret garden."

### **Focal Points**

All gardens need a focal point. A small garden needs only one, and larger gardens may need several. A focal point draws the eye to a special feature or planting and helps give the rest of the garden a more orderly look. Focal points can be as simple as one spectacular plant or planting among the others, or a feature such as a gazing globe, a water pond or a piece of sculpture or statuary. In larger gardens focal points can be created for different areas. On a patio, for example, a grouping of different sized pots can serve as a focal point, with one large pot being the center of attention. Tall plants grouped in a mass and surrounded by shorter plants can create a focal point in a garden bed, as can a contrast in color or plant type.

Ornamental features such as large rocks, a pedestal, a statue or a gazing ball are natural focal points. A quick and easy feature to add to a bed is a bird bath or a bird feeder. An arbor trellis planted with climbing plants such as morning glories or thunbergia can be an eye catching focal point for an entire garden.

### **Planning Ahead**

Re-engineering doesn't always have to be a major undertaking. Once you have a plan in place, small adjustments every year or two will keep you from having to start from scratch.

*OGT would like to thank the National Garden Bureau Inc. for this article. You can visit their website at [www.ngb.org](http://www.ngb.org) for more information.*

WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOUR PHOTOS!



Thanks to John Forgit for this season's photos - wonderful! If you would like to showcase your garden, plants or animals in the next edition of *Organic Gardens Today*, send your favorite photos to [photos@organicgardentoday.com](mailto:photos@organicgardentoday.com). We want to see your accomplishments, maybe a problem area you would like suggestions for or just pictures of your homestead. *OGT* is a magazine dedicated to you, our readers. We here to help and to offer organic advice to keep you and our environment safe!



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