

ORGANIC GARDENS *TODAY*

SPRING 2011
Volume 1, Issue 1



WIN A DOUBLE RAISED
GARDEN AND PLANTING KIT
FROM GREENLAND
GARDENER!

Our first issue!!



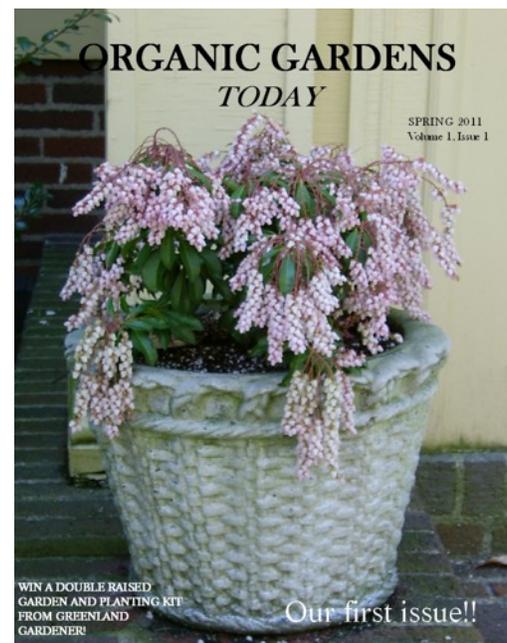
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On The Cover



Pieris japonica, Japanese Pieris or Andromeda

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From The Editor

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

First, let me begin by saying a very big THANK YOU to the many writers who have contributed their expertise to this magazine. They come from the United States and Europe, something that many horticultural print magazines cannot say. Secondly, all of the writers, as well as myself, are here to share our knowledge of good, organic principles with you. Many of the chemical companies will say that you *need* to spray chemicals and apply tons of fertilizer to have your landscape, lawn or vegetable garden look its' best – to that I say “I don't think so!”. Maybe we have all forgotten how our grandparents and great-grandparents gardened. If they saw a bug, they picked it off or squished it between their fingers. If there was a diseased part of the plant, they would cut it off and burn it before the disease spread to the rest of the plant. No chemicals, no sprays, and I am sure the vegetables were less toxic than they are today. The one comment I can tell you is that common sense and knowing your plants will always benefit your plants better than chemicals, period. That is what you will learn from this seasonal magazine.



Along with our articles, you will find sections that will be written by you, our readers. *Home Grown Gardening Tips* will list gardening tips that have worked for you and your gardens without chemicals, just by sending an e-mail to HGGT@organicgardentoday.com with your suggestions. *The Exchange* will be a place where you can list any seeds or books that you would like to share with other gardeners. We have THE best hobby, or should I say addiction, and no matter where I go in the United States, gardeners are always willing to give and give again without asking for anything in return. That is why I am proud to say I am a GARDENER! Finally, you can send photographs of you favorite plants, gardens or landscape that you are proud of, and we may include them in our photo section of the magazine or on our web site.

This new online magazine is going to be resource for you to be the best gardener you can be. If you want to see an article on a particular subject, let me know by sending an e-mail to editor@organicgardentoday.com and I will do my best to make sure it will be in a future issue. 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 “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 the first day of the new season, so please address your article for the upcoming season and make sure it is sent at least one month before the publication date for formatting.

If you like what we have accomplished with *Organic Gardens Today*, please share us with your family, friends and fellow gardeners. We rely on the word of mouth to get the word out about the magazine, and I thank you in advance for supporting us.

Good Luck, have a great spring, and more importantly, take a few minutes to enjoy what you have created. A garden is an ever-changing palette from one season to the next, one day to the next, so ENJOY!

David Daehuke, 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. Previously David was the landscape supervisor at the James A. McFaul Environmental Center where he was responsible for the management and operation of a ½-acre nursery, chief grant writer for horticultural projects, and educator of programs for public and private groups. David also developed and produced the park's first horticultural newsletter, The Horticultural Harbinger, and designed new gardens and created the largest public collection of ornamental grasses in New Jersey. David was also general manager of Ramapo Landscape Supply, a wholesale/retail/distributor of horticultural supplies, increasing sales 42% in his three year tenure. Previously David owned his own successful landscape design, maintenance and build firm for over 10 years. It was in this experience that he decided to communicate to people the joys of gardening and how they could accomplish the same results on their own, assisting the growing DIY segment of homeowners in New Jersey. He received his B.S. Degree in 1984 in Ornamental Horticulture at Delaware Valley College. Currently, he is an advisory board member for the Horticulture department at Bergen Community College in New Jersey. 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 and Kim Fernandez". He is a horticultural consultant on his Internet Web page, www.thegardeningguru.com.



PETE BOTTOMLY

With 26 years in the Horticulture Industry, Pete's experience includes a sixteen year career with one of the Nation's most respected plant growers Monrovia where he became intimate familiar with over 1,200 varieties of plants. He then founded an online garden center employee training company, wrote a business column over four years for Green Profit magazine www.greenprofit.com and consulted with garden centers about marketing, merchandising and training. He earned his B.S. in Natural Resource Management from the University of Maine at Orono. He's also a graduate of the Maine Compost School www.composting.org and an Accredited Organic Landcare Professional (AOLCP) www.organiclandcare.net He is currently a partner in the organic gardening products company www.coastofmaine.com and is the owner of an organic lawn and landscape company www.cascobaysafelawns.com He lives in Cape Elizabeth, Maine with his wife and three children.



ALISON KERR

Alison is the author of the blog Loving Nature's Garden. Alison is a transplanted gardener - she grew up in Scotland, then emigrated and took root in Kansas. She is a biologist by training, a homeschool parent by choice, a gardener by inclination, a cook by necessity, and a nature lover and writer because she can't be any other way. Alison's weekly blog posts are informative and detailed without overwhelming. She believes that gardening should be manageable, enjoyable, and kind to the environment and she always has something to say for the beginner. While most garden writers focus on one area of gardening - native plants and wildlife, edible gardening, or landscaping and maintenance - Alison's own garden combines all these elements and so she writes about them all. Be sure to sign up for Alison's updates and get all of the good, free stuff she writes.

MEET OUR WRITERS (continued)



LORET T. SETTERS

Loret is a retired, transplanted New Yorker who lives on a rural acre in Central Florida with 3 sporting dogs and plenty of wildlife. Her primary interests are wildlife conservation, gardening and protecting the environment. Loret writes a weekly blog on gardening to promote native wildlife at www.beautifulwildlifegarden.com, as the Florida representative. She enjoys photographing nature and this past year developed a fascination with insects and love photographing them and finding out their purpose in a biodiverse world. She's an active member of the Florida Native Plant Society where she volunteers at educational outreach programs and tweets and maintains the Facebook page for their Osceola County Chapter, Pine Lily. She's also the editor of their monthly newsletter, *The Lily Pad* and Publicity Chair for the May 2011 Conference. Loret has a personal blog of gardening adventures at <http://osceolafgardenblahblahblog.blogspot.com/>. *"I garden for wildlife ~ the benefit to my senses is merely a bonus"*.



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.



LORRAINE FOLEY

Lorraine Foley is a professional gardener with many years experience working with organic methods. She attended the Salesian College of Horticulture in Warrenstown, County Meath and was awarded a science degree in horticulture. She is participating in a Masters course in Rural Conservation and Management in University College Dublin. This course increases awareness of the conservation value of various rural habitats and ecosystems. Her lifelong interest in nature is coupled with her passion for gardening and plants, in particular wildflowers. Her college thesis researched wildflowers of the market town of Trim in County Meath and revealed life in medieval times by the amount of unusual herbs identified. This is now published as a booklet by Meath Heritage, called "Medieval Plants of Trim". Lorraine also has a passion for botanic illustrating and uses many of her own drawings in her publications.



KATE COPSEY

Kate is a freelance garden writer from NW Ohio, who hosts America's Home Grown Veggie Show every Saturday at 10am on www.americaswebradio.com

MEET OUR WRITERS (continued)



PENNY MAHONEY

Penny has been gardening for over 20 years and loves it! Her time as a military wife gave her the opportunity to travel all over the world and experience different cultures. She's lived and gardened in 5 different states and learned about so much about tomatoes from the people who do it best...the Italians. She was fortunate enough to live in Italy for many years and learned a lot of what she knows about tomato gardening from them.

Penny currently lives in Myrtle Beach and has a small farm where she raises a lot of the seeds she sells on-line. She started Penny's Tomatoes because she loves gardening and believe that everyone should experience the taste of a big juicy home grown tomato. You won't find the kind of tomatoes seeds she sells at your local gardening center. Ever try a black tomato? Red, Black, Yellow and Orange has many mouth watering varieties. Check out her tomato selection at www.PennysTomatoes.com.



JUDY NAUSEEF

Judy Nauseef, APLD has designed gardens for over 20 years and has gardened for many more. She specializes in residential landscapes and has a strong interest in native plants. She served on the board of directors of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers for eight years. www.judynauseeflandscapedesign.com



Alisa Rose Seidlitz

Alisa brings decades of expertise in Organic and Sustainable garden design. Her love of Nature and Delight in creating spaces brings Joy, Relaxation, and constant Smiles to her clients' lives. As a value added, she also is a Certified Green Building Professional and Eco-Interior Designer, as well as Western Feng Shui Consultant.



Arctostaphylos Uva-Ursi – Bearberry or kinnikinick

HOME GROWN GARDENING TIPS



Do you have a gardening tip that can save time and money?

Way that you can recycle and reuse items from around your house in your garden?



Have an organic way of deterring animals and pests from your garden without the use of dangerous chemicals?

We want these tips, organic in nature, that you can share with your fellow gardeners. Whether it is something that has been handed down from generation to generation, or a tip that you found the other day, let us know!

Send an e-mail to:

HGGT@ORGANICGARDENSTODAY.COM

We look forward to hearing from you!



DAFFODIL BASICS

By David Daehnke

Just mention the word daffodil and most of us picture sunny yellow flowers brightening a spring landscape in our yards. Famous for the bright yellow cultivars like jonquils and the yellow trumpet, daffodils come in hundreds of colors that range from the paper-whites to peach, gold, bold orange and pink.

Narcissus – Jonquil – Daffodil: You may have some confusion about just what to call these flowers because three terms are commonly used: narcissus, jonquil, and daffodil. Narcissus is the Latin or botanical name for all daffodils. Known as the "poet's flower," Narcissus is named after the mythological

Grecian youth who was so captivated by his own beauty that he turned into a narcissus flower. The Narcissus family is divided into 12 divisions of 70 species based on size, shape, and growing height with over 25,000 cultivars. Jonquils are one class of Narcissus characterized by long narrow leaves, two or three flowers on a stem, and a sweet fragrance. The term daffodil is the common English name and generally refers to the common yellow trumpet flower surrounded by six petals on stems 14 to 20 inches tall.

Where to plant: Daffodils are one of the easiest flowers to grow and, once established, multiply each year and provide larger displays of color. These spring bulbs look beautiful planted in naturalized woodland settings, in formal beds, or mixed with other bulbs and perennials. The beauty of daffodils is that they easily fit into landscapes, along a driveway or fence, under the base of a deciduous tree, or in forced bulb pots to welcome spring.

When and How to plant: If you haven't already planted your daffodils, you will have to forego them in your yard this season. Bulbs require time to develop a root system before cold weather comes and the soil freezes. Daffodil bulbs should be planted once the summer soil cools, from late September into late November. Plant them with the pointed end up in full sun approximately 5 to 8" deep in well drained, loosely packed soil. The depth is determined by the bulb size; plant the larger bulbs deeper. If you plant in clusters in the same hole, you should leave 2 to 6" between bulbs to allow for growing room.



Less is more when planting daffodils. Space them according to the package directions and resist the temptation to plant them too closely together. To help the development of the bulbs, you may want to use a special fertilizer. A slow release fertilizer should be worked into the soil (about ¼ cup per square foot). Never place fertilizer directly in the bottom of the hole because it can kill emerging roots and promote rot. After planting in a location with good drainage, water the bulbs well. Moisture is important since bulbs will not grow in dry conditions. For daffodils to make the most impact, plant dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of bulbs in a single planting.



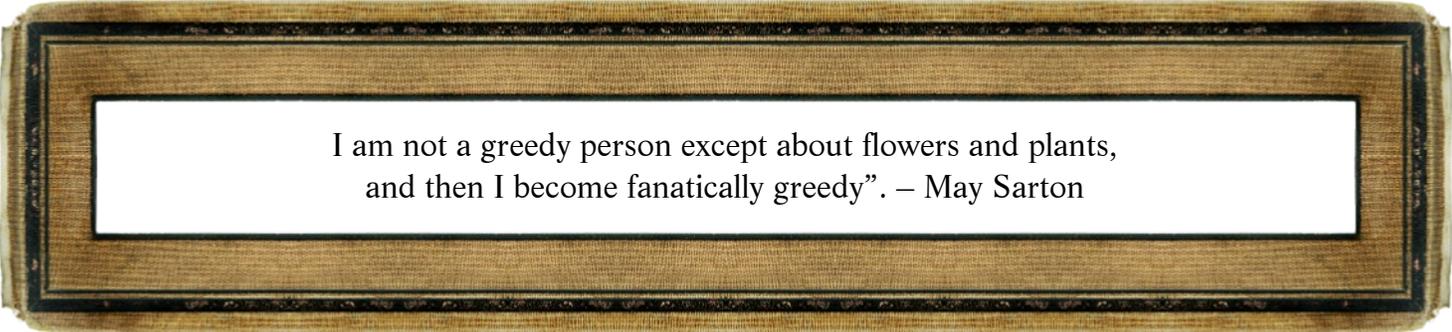
After the bulbs bloom: One common mistake when growing daffodils is to cut back the foliage after the flowers finish blooming. After flowering, remove the faded flowers and the bloom stalks. Let the foliage turn yellow and die. (This usually takes about 4 weeks). Fertilize after blooming is over to allow the foliage to collect both sunlight and

moisture. Use a simple bone or blood meal, or you can use a simple 5-10-5 fertilizer which is organic. During this time, the plant uses the nutrients from the foliage to produce the energy for blooms next year.

Dividing daffodils: After the bulbs have been in the ground for a number of years, you will probably find they are no longer blooming but still have lots of greenery. Daffodils are very long-lived, but most varieties need to be divided and replanted when they become crowded. Divide the bulbs in late spring or early fall. Carefully dig around the clumps, handle the bulbs gently and brush off the excess soil. Discard the soft bulbs and replant only the hard firm ones. A mulch such as shredded bark, straw or ground corn cobs is suitable.

This Harbinger of Spring is welcomed by every homeowner, gardener and child everywhere. Enjoy them this Spring, and make sure to plant more in the fall!

David Daehnke is widely known as “The Gardening Guru” and can be heard on WGHT 1500 AM (www.ghtradio.com). David is also available for lectures and landscape consultations. Please visit his web site, www.thegardeningguru.com for more information. If you have questions for Dave, please e-mail them to dave@thegardeningguru.com.



I am not a greedy person except about flowers and plants,
and then I become fanatically greedy”. – May Sarton

Thou Shalt Not Till

By Pete Bottomly

Imagine a typical American farm. What do you see? Plowed fields! All those millions of acres of professionally farmed lands can lead us to believe that tilling is the best practice. Unfortunately, this is an example of conventional wisdom misleading us. Large scale commercial farms destroy the soil through tilling, fertilizing and applying pesticides. The now unstructured soil blows away in the wind or washes away in heavy rain. As home gardeners, we can do better.... We can work with Nature to improve the fertility and structure of our soil by understanding the prime directive, which is to leave the soil alone!

No till farming is simply the practice of planting the earth with the least disturbance. Keeping the soil structure intact is critically important because healthy soil is an amazingly complex community composed of many thousands of species of inter-related organisms. This “Soil Food Web” works in concert with plants in an ongoing trade of nutrient commodities – Plants synthesize and provide carbohydrates for the soil microbes and the little guys reciprocate by producing nitrogen compounds that plants need. It’s a beautiful system..... Until someone flips it upside down!

A rich garden soil takes many years to develop. At first, fungi and bacteria aggregate soil particles and create the texture and structure necessary for good moisture and air movement. Once this structure is in place, more organisms move in, which increases soil productivity. What drives soil productivity is something called “nutrient recycling” which is really just a “poop loop” generated by organisms eating plant stuff, each other or each other’s poop..... You don’t need to think about this when you pick your gorgeous veggies!

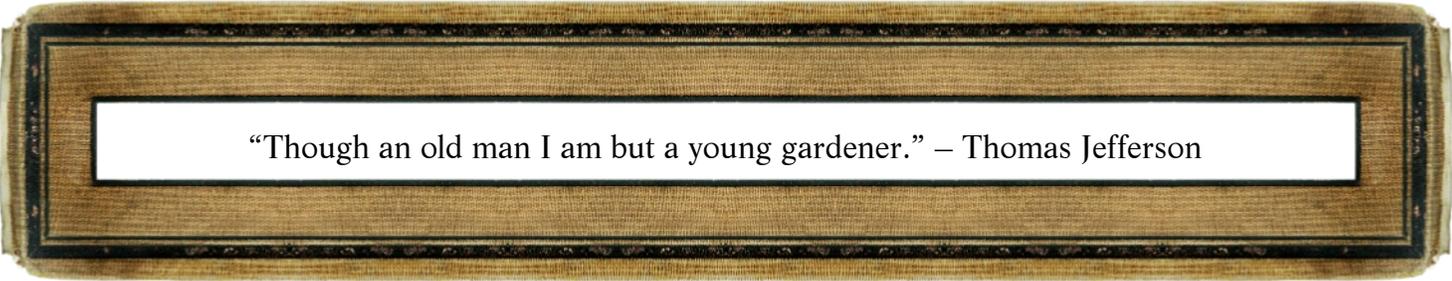
Envision the soil as a metropolis like New York City. At the lowest levels of the city, there are pipes, wires and cables all intertwined in a million miles of intelligent tangle that actually keeps the whole system running somewhat smoothly (the fungi). Then there are the layers of beings: They catch rides through tunnels, on the streets and even up and down through vertical tubes (the bacteria). Some beings stay low all the time while others get close to the sky because that's where they make their living! All of the big moving parts of the city are totally dependent on the beings and the intelligent tangle (the protozoa, amoebae, nematodes, arthropods and worms). Flip this city upside down with a giant shovel, or worse, roto-till it, and the intricately organized system is destroyed and most of the life with it.

So, how do you garden without messing with the soil? Here are some simple practices:

- Fertilizing – Adding a food source for the soil microbes can improve the living energy and productivity of your soil. Natural granular fertilizers (manure, animal or feed based) can be applied to the soil surface prior to top-dressing with compost. It's important to cover with compost. Late fall or early spring are the best times.
- Composting – Top dress with compost to add diversity to the Soil Food Web and provide food and habitat for larger organisms.
- Planting – This is the easiest part. Once you've determined the proper spacing for your specific varieties, simply plant your seeds or seedlings with the least amount of digging possible. Any soil you remove from a hole should be spread at the surface and it's always a good idea to top dress again with compost in the disturbed area.

After several years of the no till approach with consistent composting your soil should be naturally loose and aerated enough to plant with your bare hands.

With 26 years in the Horticulture Industry, Pete's experience includes a sixteen year career with one of the Nation's most respected plant growers Monrovia where he became intimately familiar with over 1,200 varieties of plants. He is currently a partner in the organic gardening products company www.coastofmaine.com and is the owner of an organic lawn and landscape company www.cascobaysafelawns.com He lives in Cape Elizabeth, Maine with his wife and three children.



“Though an old man I am but a young gardener.” – Thomas Jefferson

Native Plant Gardening...Reward Worth the Wait

by Loret T. Setters

Some gardeners need instant gratification...large trees, plants in full flower and the like. I prefer to experience the reward of watching the transformation of a small seedling, shrub or tree that grows up before my eyes. Gardening with native plants here in Florida is perfect for me.

Native plants tend not to provide instant satisfaction (if your definition of satisfaction is having an immediately mature landscape) but do provide long term results. They slowly evolve, taking a year or two to establish the root system needed to help the plant withstand our rapidly changing weather. We have harsh, hot summers and having a deep-root system helps the plant stay hydrated so it doesn't wither and die. We can

have a freeze during winter which will kill off the upper vegetation, but if the root system is well developed, that plant will spring back as soon as the warmer weather appears. This is important for two reasons...in the long run, you save money and you save work. It isn't necessary to replace plants every year that succumb to the cold or insect pests and you don't have to foot a hefty water bill with plants that have thirsty shallow roots. After the two years or so, they quickly catch up to the more mature offerings but they have staying power, standing up to whatever the weather may throw at them. They are naturally adapted to the Florida conditions. In the meantime, fill in with some annuals until your plants start putting their efforts into the above-ground foliage which will truly be prolific once it comes.

I planted a coral honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*), two years ago and stuck a large pole in the middle for it to climb up. It looked a little odd in year one and even last year, but my patience is being rewarded this year. Heavy growth has begun to work its way to the top and the beautiful red flowers are sure to draw the hummingbirds. It is now flourishing and I don't have to worry about watering or fertilizer, it has done it all on its own. I even plan on taking a couple of cuttings to get it started in other areas of my yard. All it took was some patience on my part.



Plants native to the area are also adapted to the fluctuating rain of Florida that can be feast or famine, depending on whether it is summer rainy season or our usually dry season of winter. A great many natives are drought tolerant and yet will survive occasional flooding. Native plants perform better by keeping balance among native insects thus avoiding the need of pesticides. You save money by eliminating the need to buy chemicals that can harm your health or poison the aquifer. In the long run, native plants provide for life and the biodiversity needed to support a sustainable landscape. Plants provide for the insects, insects provide for the reptiles and birds, birds keep the pest populations in check and so on up the food chain.

I'm blessed to live in a rural location. Unfortunately, the lot was clear-cut except for a few pine trees, but the soil was not altered and it has a pond. Before I learned about native plants and their importance to wildlife I purchased a lot of plants from the local big box stores which are now deceased because I have a pine flatwoods-type ecosystem, parts of which is also occasionally host to standing water. I discovered that the plants I had been choosing were mostly exotics and would do little to feed the resident native wildlife population that I so enjoy watching from my windows. The more I learned, the more I began to let the vacant areas restore themselves naturally and the result is a rich array of numerous wildflower, shrub and tree species and with that insects which serve as food for the many birds that grace my property. One of the more prolific shrubs is southern bayberry (*Myrica cerifera*) that produces great nesting coverage, is a larval host for the Gray Hairstreak butterfly as well as several moth species and produces copious amounts of waxy berries that feed birds and mammals through the winter. Mockingbirds are building nests in these shrubs this spring.



I currently have bluebirds nesting on my property, as I have for the past several years. They choose my place because I don't use pesticides and I keep a meadow area that has rich diversity in the form of insects and berry producing shrubs which are so necessary for them to rear their babies. Most baby birds are reared exclusively on insects to meet their protein needs. A feeder full of seed just doesn't fit the bill to nurture young fledglings. In addition to bluebirds, I've also had a couple of Great Crested Flycatchers, Brown-Headed Nuthatches and Pileates Woodpeckers who chose the native shrubs and pine snags as nesting areas. It is quite interesting to watch nature at its best. I also have numerous native green anoles because I allow my shrubs to attain height necessary for them to compete with the invading Cuban anoles. I have regular visits from herons, hawks, kingfishers and even an eagle or two.

You can learn a lot about the value of natives plants in the book *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas Tallamy which brings to light the importance of redefining what our home landscapes should look like. The time has come to start choosing native plants moving forward in your landscape needs, in order to preserve habitats so future generations can experience the native birds, butterflies and mammals that were more prevalent when we were young. Buy plants from local sources that can be found via The Association of Florida Native Nurseries Website (www.afnn.org). Consider visiting a meeting of your local Florida Native Plant Society Chapter (www.fnps.org) which offers educational programs to help you accomplish landscaping in a water saving, wildlife friendly manner. Most programs are free and the public is encouraged to attend. That's where I learned a lot and the results are amazing.



Loret is the Publicity Chairman for the 31st Annual Florida Native Plant Society Conference and Plant Sale scheduled for May 19-22, 2011. It will take place at the Sheraton Orlando North in Maitland, Florida. For registration, speaker, workshop and field trip information, visit www.fnps.org/conference or call 321-271-6702. Follow her on twitter @PineLilyFNPS for great conservation and native plant information on a daily basis.

'A cauliflower is a cabbage with a college education.' – Mark Twain

Compost... Liquid Gold For Your Garden

By Penny Mahoney



If you are thinking about starting your own compost pile think about this...

With just a little knowledge you can turn your everyday garbage into nutrient rich fertilizer for your yard or garden and the best part is...it's organic.

Let's start with your container...you can buy or build something to house your compost pile. A wooden frame (like a sandbox) made out of 2 x 10's (or what ever) in the corner of our yard will work great. Add your scraps to it on a daily basis and "stir" or "fluff" it

up 2 to 3 times a week. Many materials can be added to a compost pile, including leaves, grass clippings, straw, woody brush, vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds, livestock manure, sawdust, egg shells even shredded paper. (hey paper is made out of wood right?)

Note: Adding kitchen scrapes to compost may attract flies and insects. To prevent this problem, make a hole in the center of your pile and bury the waste. Do not compost meat scraps, dead animals, pet manure, diseased plant material, or noxious weeds.

For more tips go to <http://pennystomatoes.com/how-to-grow-heirloom-tomatoes.html>

Like all living things your compost pile needs three things to be successful... **Air, Food and Water.** These three things provide the perfect conditions to maintain a healthy balance for the living microbes that break it down. A mixture of greens (such as table scrapes, grass clippings, etc) these are the "foods". Browns (such as straw, woody brush, sawdust, etc.) help keep it aerated. And microbes like a warm, moist environment (not soggy). To wet and your microbes can't breath and your compost pile will smell (like rotting garbage) because they can't do their job. If it's to dry it will slow down the decomposition of your compost pile.

Your finished compost will be dark in color and will have an earthy smell (like the smell of soil). Usually, it's difficult to recognize any of the original ingredients, although bits of hard-to-decompose materials (such as straw) sometimes can be seen.

Why Is Compost Like Gold?

Compost does several things to benefit the soil that artificial or synthetic fertilizers cannot do. The organic matter in compost helps the way water interacts with the soil. In sandy soils, compost acts as a sponge to help the soil retain water (in this way, it protects plants against drought). In clay soils, compost helps to aerate and add porosity to the soil, making it drain more quickly so that it doesn't stay waterlogged. Compost also inoculates the soil with beneficial microbes (bacteria, fungi, etc.) These microbes are able to extract nutrients from the mineral part of the soil and eventually pass these rich nutrients on to your plants. And healthy soil means a healthy yard or garden.

You can say that composting is nature's way of recycling garbage into gold.

We have a lot of great tips at Penny's Tomatoes so come and check us out www.PennysTomatoes.com

Penny has been gardening for over 20 years and loves it! Her time as a military wife gave her the opportunity to travel all over the world and experience different cultures. She's lived and gardened in 5 different states and learned about so much about tomatoes from the people who do it best...the Italians. She was fortunate enough to live in Italy for many years and learned a lot of what she knows about tomato gardening. She lives in Myrtle Beach and has a small farm where she raises a lot of the seeds she sells online.

Starting a Culinary Herb Garden From Seed

By Kate Copsey

Starting your first kitchen herb garden can be expensive and if you rely on local sources for plants you will miss out on some terrific culinary herbs. Many of the herbs you can enjoy in the garden can be easily grown from seed which brings down the cost of getting a good variety of herbs and can be a fun way to start your garden.



Both perennial and annual herbs can be grown from seed but it is worth thinking about how much of each herb you expect to use. Sage, rosemary and thyme both grow slowly from seed and most people only need one or two plants, making it worthwhile buying a small plant. Other herbs like French Tarragon cannot be grown from seed and is only available as a plant. Most of the other culinary herbs though can be grown very easily in just a few weeks.

Chives should be started about a month before your last frost and this herb can tolerate some light frosts. Spread a few seeds onto some potting mix in a container, sprinkle more mix over the top, water and cover so that the moisture does not evaporate. In about ten days your grass-like chives will start to emerge. When the seedlings are about six inches high, transplant the whole pot full together in the garden so that you get a nice clump of chives to harvest. When you harvest chives, sever the stems near the base rather than snipping at the top. Snip a bunch of chives over fresh vegetables or use in a salad.

Basils come in a vast variety of colors and flavors and grow very easily from seed. Purple basils are fun to grow and look wonderful in any garden bed as they produce a pretty white or pink flower. Traditional green basil comes with large leaves in the Genovese varieties and tiny leaves in the globe varieties. Traditional basil flavors as well as citrus flavors can be found.

Cilantro is an herb that should never be purchased as a plant because it bolts too quickly when you put it into the ground. Sprinkle seeds into the prepared garden bed, and keep moist until they germinate. Sow a few seeds each week so that you have a succession of cilantro to use. When the plants finally go to seed, gather the pale seeds for next year. The seeds are also known as the spice coriander, which can be used in curries and crushed into salads.

Parsley can also be grown from seed but does take a while. Parsley is a biennial, meaning that it grows this year and then produces seed next year. For a continual harvest of parsley, sow some seeds this year and a few more next year too. The seeds do need to be covered as they do not germinate in light and they can take several weeks to germinate so be patient and keep the area moist. Alternatively start the seeds indoors and place the container in a black garbage bag to keep it dark. Both curly leaf parsley and Italian leaf can be grown from seeds.

Adding some seed grown herbs to your herb garden along with a few purchased plants will give you a full year of flavor, plus some to preserve for next year.

Kate Copsey is a freelance garden writer from NW Ohio, who hosts America's Home Grown Veggie Show every Saturday at 10 am on www.americaswebradio.com



WIN A FREE DOUBLE BED GARDEN AND PLANTING KIT FROM



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GARDEN KIT**



[Send an e-mail to contest@organicgardentoday.com](mailto:contest@organicgardentoday.com)

One lucky winner will receive a double bed garden and one planting kit, shipped directly to their home, free of charge! We would like to thank [Greenland Gardener](#) for their generosity. These kits assemble is a snap, do not rot, and are attractive in the landscape. Even if you don't win, consider visiting their web site and purchasing one for yourself!

(One winner will be picked randomly from the collection of e-mails received. Only one e-mail per person/contest. Winner must allow OGT to publish their name in the next issue of OGT. OGT is not responsible for setting up shipping and any damages from shipping.)

The Garden Of Your Dreams

By Alison Kerr

I sat there at the kitchen table, chin propped up on hand, staring, wondering how to make the garden of my dreams.

I wandered across the scruffy, bland lawn, digging at hard-packed weeds, knowing I could have something better.

I flipped through catalogs, browsed websites, vowing that some day I'd have a garden to love.

Now my garden is taking shape - last year I built my [rain garden](#) and two big [new raised beds](#). This year I will do more.

Make dreams a reality

Sometimes it's hard to catch dreams and make them real.

A better garden is possible. And it's easier than you might think, once you get started. The first step is the hardest. But by using these five steps you, too, can plan your dream garden. Make your dream happen.

1 - Dream your garden

Step 1 is to dream your garden. Use a journal, notebook, or a dream board. You need to know what you are dreaming of before you start shopping, digging, and building.

2 - Make a list

Step 2 is to make a list. What questions do you have to answer before you rush out to the garden center or place an order online? Which plants, tools, seeds and supplies do you need? Make a list for your dream garden.

Whether you're planning a butterfly garden, a place for bird nesting, a raised vegetable bed, or simply a few pots on your patio, your list is your best friend.

3 - Find the things you need

Step 3 is to find the things you need. You have your list. Now, you need to work out the answers to any questions which came up in step 2. Work your list until it's a checklist of actions and objects. After completing this step you'll be ready to shop and dig.



4 - Get a mentor

Step 4 is to get a mentor. Gardening is more fun when you share. A mentor is the ideal mate to make your garden dream a reality. If you can't find a mentor, at least get a buddy.

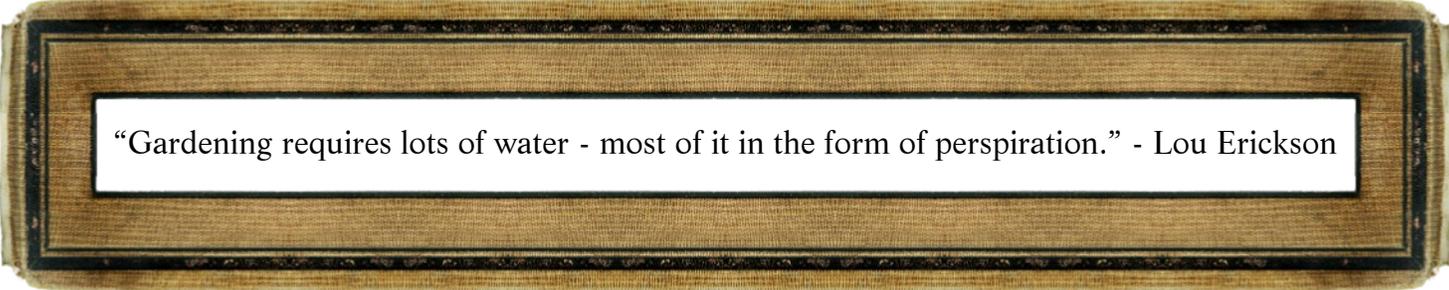
A mentor can temper your dreams, share their experiences of what works, and encourage you. A buddy can share your journey - you will help each other along the path of creating your dream garden. Either might get down in the dirt with you, or they may just be an encouraging presence.

5 - Put it all together

Step 5 is to put it all together. You have your list, you have your plan, you are ready to act. Get out there and make your garden dream a reality. Be realistic. Set-backs happen. Live, learn, and keep growing.

I really want you to make your dream garden real. I have put together a comprehensive guide with a lot more details on these Five Steps to Your Dream Garden. Soon my guide will be available as a 14 page e-book. Right now you can get it for free online when you [sign up to get Loving Nature's Garden posts](#). You will also get a copy of my e-book **Simple Sprouts**, a no-fuss guide to growing your own food.

What are you dreaming of? How would you like your garden to change in 2011?



“Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration.” - Lou Erickson

So Who's in Your Garden?

By Lorraine Foley

As much as I love the company of my terrier dog, Trixie, she can be a real pest in the garden, digging holes in the veg patch and trampling on my flowers. She follows me around with mild curiosity as I tackle the perennial challenges of weeding, pruning, seedbed preparation and composting. And when it gets all too strenuous, she can be found snoozing in a shady corner of long grass at the back of garden. She is in good company because the long grass is bursting with life. It's simply hopping with frogs, leafhoppers and all manner of shield bugs! It is a particularly popular breeding site for butterflies, moths and other arthropods.

It brings to mind the important role that gardens play in biodiversity and the habitats they can support. Let's consider the role of grass in the garden. The clipped uniform lawn comes to mind, however many lawns contain many species of grasses and the occasional “weed”. Within this green desert, weeds offer an oasis of pollen and nectar, however limited the supply. Allowing some grass to grow long as a margin provides a very important habitat as a favorable breeding ground for insects. It also provides cover and food for amphibians and mammals throughout the year. This





grass habitat is a reservoir for pests and their nemesis, namely predators. This complex relationship within the grassy knoll often spills out into the garden, providing beneficial biological controls that reduce the need for pesticides. Going organic couldn't be easier once you understand the relationships within your garden. So, let's explore the relationship of grasses and fauna in more detail. In nature, long grass often contains many types of species, flowers and herbage. This diversity of planting offers food, shelter,

access and breeding sites for arthropods, birds and small mammals. Different species flower at various times and reach different heights. The complexities of grass habitats vary with each stage of growth. Butterflies and moths lay their eggs precariously on blades of grass during summer. Wild flowers among the grass provide nectar and pollen for bees, beetles and butterflies. In return, flowers are pollinated and produce seed, another food source for birds and field mice over winter. This complex relationship of pollination, seed dispersal and predation occurs in your garden already but can be enhanced further.

Now, I am not suggesting that you stop mowing the lawn nor let the garden go wild! However, a well maintained lawn can be naturalized by the addition of spring flowering bulbs, creating a mosaic of daffodils, crocuses, snowdrops and muscari. Such bulbs herald the start of spring and their nectar is a welcome source of food for queen bees emerging from their winter slumber.

Long scraggly grass is not attractive but can translate into a beautiful prairie-style planting if mixed with wildflowers. A sea of swaying color is only limited by space and imagination. This natural wilderness can be framed by a formal hedge, such as *Buxus sempervirens*, creating a dramatic contrast. Alternatively sowing annual flowers in spring can provide a carpet of instant color and structure to any bare patch within one growing season, yet, at the same time attracting pollinating insects and predators that in turn control pests throughout the garden.

Speaking of pests, Trixie awakens, disturbed from her stupor by the squeaking wheel of my wheelbarrow as I trod carefully across my lawn. She stretches,



wags the tail and trots after me on a new exploration. Completely oblivious to the warfare that lurks in the deep shady corners of this garden, she happily sniffs and licks everything in her path.

Lorraine is a professional gardener who specializes in creating sustainable gardens and promoting wildlife havens. www.wildlandscape.com

“Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity.”

Lindley Karstens

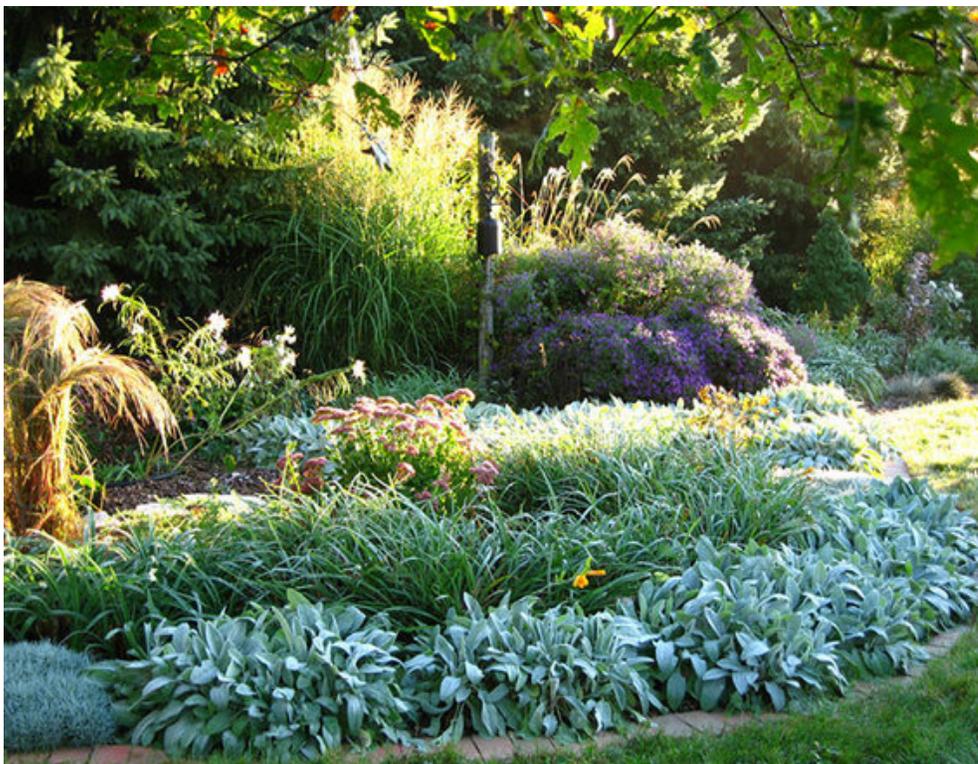
Remembrances

By Judy Nauseef, APLD, ICNP

I have been lacking in inspiration lately for my dear blog. I look for excuses, such as an injured left hand. However, the more fruitful exercise would be to look for the source of inspiration. Once again I search my childhood memories and how plants played a part.

Clover

I remember sitting in the grassy lawn of my Aunt Miriam and Uncle Nat with my sister and my girl cousins. We were making chains of white clover flowers while the boys played ball and the adults talked. We had a slightly older girl cousin who we thought quite beautiful and we were making the necklace for her, which we draped around her neck as she bent down to us.



Myrtle and Mulberries

My family lived for a while in an older home on a large unkempt lot. It was a great place to play all kinds of made up games. Mulberry trees lined one side of the yard. My sister and I and our friends must have eaten gallons of fruit from these long neglected trees. Ravenous myrtle covered the shaded ground under and around the trees and made the area dark and threatening even as we filled our mouths with purple berries.

Lilacs

Who does not like lilacs in May? There was a long hedge on the edge of the sorority house yard. It was a corner lot, so as we walked

along the sidewalk on our way to and from Sunday school we ran our hands through the blossoms.

Forsythia and Sycamores

Forsythia blooms reliably and beautifully in Indiana. It bloomed all over town. My mother told me the name, which is remarkable since she was not a gardener and showed no interest in our yard. I have always loved the plant because it made her happy. The town was filled with towering sycamores. They lined the boulevard we drove down to get to school. Years later I made my first tree ID during a college class held outside in a quad under trees. The professor asked who knew the name of one of the trees. My hand shot up. A sycamore.

Rose Garden

My parents bought a big brick house. My sister and I considered it marvelous. It came with a rose garden which immediately declined. I think my Dad mowed it down finally.

Blueberries and Daylilies

Blueberries grow wild in Northern Ontario. We could hardly believe our luck. The cottage was surrounded with underbrush, much of which was low-growing blueberry shrubs. Poison ivy lurked among the berry plants. "Always wear shoes and socks." The fruit was tiny, but delicious and perfect for pancakes and pies. Daylilies surrounded the stone patio. They were the orange kind found in ditches. Someone had planted them there. My mother loved them.

Judy Nauseef, APLD has designed gardens for over 20 years and has gardened for many more. She specializes in residential landscapes and has a strong interest in native plants. She served on the board of directors of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers for eight years.

www.judynauseeflandscapedesign.com



THE EXCHANGE

Do you have extra seeds you have saved from last year?

Maybe a book on horticulture you would like to share?



Then this is the place to share your extra seeds and books with your fellow gardening enthusiasts. Just send an e-mail to exchange@organicgardentoday.com with a description of the item you would like to share or swap, your name, and how they get can in touch with you.

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW AND WHAT YOU HAVE!

Carbon Footprints in Your Garden ?

By Alisa Rose Seidlitz

Today most people are aware that the term "green" is used to describe fuel energy efficiency and the slowing or preventing of carbon emissions, i.e. the carbon footprint.

Absolutely as crucial (some would say even more so) as reducing our carbon output is sequestering the carbon that we do produce. Places which sequester carbon are referred to as "carbon sinks" -- places on the planet that actually draw CO₂ out of our air and absorb the carbon.

Carbon is naturally absorbed into healthy, living soil.

So every space that has healthy soil with healthy plants growing there helps life on the whole planet!

That's because healthy living soil is filled with all sorts of marvelous microbes and fungi which actually eat the carbon!

To Have Healthy Soil :

Completely eliminate the use of any and all man-made garden chemicals. Herbicides and the like destroy the life in soil along with the weeds.

Better to :

- 1) Weed by hand. Weeding can be fun and good exercise too! Simply relax, take your time, enjoy feeling the soil, the air all around you - you'll get a bird's-eye view on the ground (where there's soil filled with life, there's lots of good food for birds!)
- 2) Apply plenty of compost. Compost adds vital nutrients to the soil, allows healthy microbes to flourish, and loosens the soil to make weeding a breeze!
- 3) Pour boiling H₂O on the weeds (easily done in sidewalk cracks, for example)
- 4) Plant densely so weeds are shaded out.
- 5) Use thick, natural mulch such as untreated chipped tree bark.
- 6) "Sheet mulch" with cardboard. Cover the entire area that you want to be weed free with at least one inch of plain, uncolored cardboard, over lapping each piece as you layer to make sure there are no open and uncovered areas. The cardboard eventually decomposes, enriching the soil further.
- 7) Simply let the weeds stay. Many plants that Americans consider weeds are truly wonderful herbs.

Two examples : Dandelions are nutritious medicine and plantain draws out splinters and the irritants from insect bites.

A natural garden with healthy soil filled with life brings birds and butterflies, is a pure pleasure to delight in, and has some of the very best feng shui!

My Motto : Delete Concrete (and asphalt)!

We have been paving all over our beloved planet with our buildings, roads, parking lots, sidewalks and... even in our yards !

Every square inch of impermeable paving contributes to the horrendous state of the environmental affairs because covering the soil :

1. prevents it from absorbing H₂O, leading to more massive flooding in ever more extensive areas, soil erosion, water table depletion and pollution of rivers, lakes and oceans with runoff filled with chemicals and pollutants of all sorts.
2. prevents the microbes from absorbing CO₂ (i.e. carbon).

So Then What?!

Healthy soil allows aquifers to be replenished and pollutants to be cleaned out of air and water.

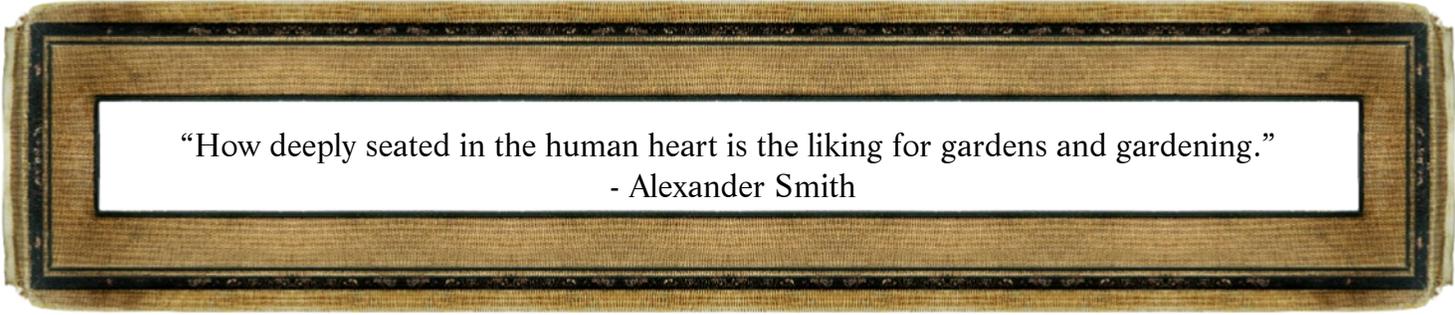
So then, what can you do, how can you help ?

Well, whenever possible and appropriate to the site :

- 1) Remove as much existing paving as possible. The paving material can be recycled or reused to make retaining walls or stepping stones.
- 2) Utilize "pervious", or permeable, concrete. This type of paving provides a firm structural surface while allowing water to penetrate down to the soil below.
- 3) Use stepping stones instead of a solid pathway, planting the spaces in between. Do the same for patios or driveways.
- 4) Make pathways of grass, bark or gravel.
- 5) Use small, medium or large pots or planter boxes on top of the pavement -- YES, every square inch of soil counts for carbon sequestration, wherever it may be!

AND, please, now that you know, spread this knowledge far and wide for the benefit your own beautiful garden, and for the Benefit of All. Thank You!

Alisa brings decades of expertise in Organic and Sustainable garden design. Her love of Nature and Delight in creating spaces brings Joy, Relaxation, and constant Smiles to our clients' lives. As a value added, she is also a Certified Green Building Professional and Eco-Interior Designer, as well as Western Feng Shui Consultant.



“How deeply seated in the human heart is the liking for gardens and gardening.”
- Alexander Smith

Why Plants Fail to Bloom

By David Daehnke

Flowering plants that don't bloom as promised can be a big disappointment in your garden. Reasons for lack of blooming are as diverse as the palette of plants from which to choose, but a little detective work can usually pinpoint the trouble. The most common factors associated with blooming, or lack thereof, include light, plant age, nutrition, extreme temperatures and improper pruning.

Many woody plants must reach a certain age before they are mature enough to produce flowers. Fruit trees, such as apples and pears, can require as many as five or six years to become fruitful. Ginkgo trees can take up to 15 years to bloom (which could be a good thing!). The most common question I am asked is “Why doesn't my wisteria bloom?” and the reason is wisteria can take anywhere from 7 to 10 years to bloom, so

patience is a must. Add a stressful environment (drought, excessive moisture, etc) to a juvenile plant, and flowering may be delayed even further.

Plants that are old enough to flower, or have done so in the past, may quit doing so for a variety of reasons. Flowering may be sparse or completely absent when a plant is under stress, so be sure the plant is positioned in an appropriate location for that particular species. For example, some plants flower best in full sun; others may prefer the cooler conditions found in the shade. Some plants, such as peonies, will flower sparsely or not at all when grown in shade. Similarly, shade-loving plants, such as begonias, will not bloom well in full sun. In gardens where other trees and shrubs are nearby, light conditions can change drastically over time as landscape plants cast more shade, or removal of a large plant suddenly leaves formerly shaded plants exposed.

Some plants, such as chrysanthemums and poinsettias, flower in response to short day lengths, or more accurately, long nights. If the plants don't receive the appropriate break from light, their season of bloom will be delayed indefinitely.

Overfeeding plants with nitrogen can encourage them to produce lush foliage at the expense of blossoms. A lack of nutrients, particularly nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, also may delay flowering. Stick with a balanced, low-analysis fertilizer, such as 5-10-5 or 10-6-4, to apply adequate nutrition without overdoing.

Some gardeners unknowingly remove flower potential from their plants by pruning at the wrong time of year. Landscape plants that bloom in early spring set their flower buds in autumn on last year's growth. If you prune these plants in late winter, you'll also be removing many or all of the flower buds. The rule of thumb is to prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines after blooms have faded.

Mother Nature can deal a blow to buds with extreme low winter temperatures or late frosts in spring after growth has begun. Though this past winter was very snowy, we did have some spring cool-downs at night. And some plants may be winter hardy, but their flower buds are routinely killed, even by normal spring weather.

So if you have landscape plants that are not performing up to par, do your homework to find the appropriate requirements, and plan to replace the "duds" with plants that are better adapted to your growing conditions. Try moving the "duds" to other areas of your property with different soil, light and moisture conditions. You may be pleasantly surprised! Remember to plant the right plant in the right place. This rule of thumb, as simply as it may seem, is one of the most important.

David Daehnke is widely known as "The Gardening Guru" and can be heard on WGHT 1500 AM (www.ghtradio.com). David is also available for lectures and landscape consultations. Please visit his web site, www.thegardeningguru.com for more information. If you have questions for Dave, please e-mail them to dave@thegardeningguru.com.



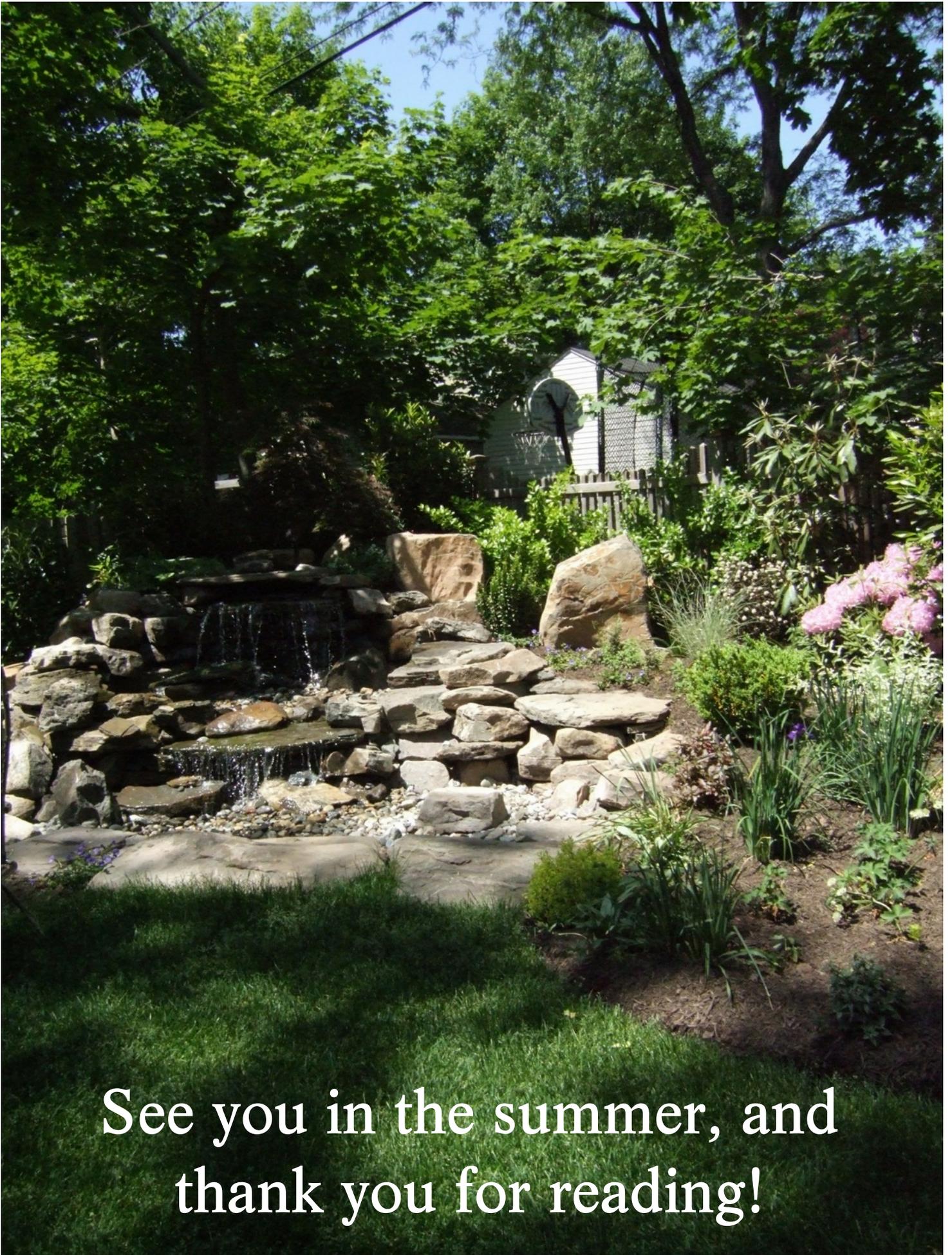
"A Gardening We Grow" - Author Unknown

Your Photos



Send us photos of your garden, special plants or prize-winning fruits and vegetables to photos@organicgardentoday.com

WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE THEM!!



See you in the summer, and
thank you for reading!