



SPRING IS TIME TO SHOW OFF FOR PACIFIC NORTHWEST PLANTS

Spring 2004

All gardeners experience “spring is here” feelings, which is a sure sign to begin planning and executing that summer garden space. Just because you live in an apartment or condominium does not mean you can’t start digging in the dirt. Instead of playing in the ground you can dig in pots and window boxes. This newsletter will focus on early spring plantings.

CLAY POTS AND PLANTERS

There is little to beat the earthy beauty of ordinary clay pots. They blend well with their surroundings and compliment virtually every type of plant. Make sure they are frost proof if they are to stay outside when temperatures plummet.

The appearance of clay pots depends on where they are made. The typical pots of northern European countries are generally very red in hue. Clay pots from the sunny Mediterranean look very different to those of northern Europe. Greek pithoi, for example, traditionally used to store grain and oil, come in many elegant shapes and have a wonderful sandy colour.

Your choice does not have to be restricted to garden pots. Any type of container will work, as long as drainage holes can be drilled in the base. Try using old beer barrel halves, decorative ceramic pots, old chimney pots, buckets, agricultural baskets such as potato pickers, or traditional garden baskets such as wooden trugs. With a little imagination, shopping baskets, bird cages and lanterns can be transformed into hanging baskets, and old olive oil cans in a row can become original window boxes.

PLANTS IN POTS: The Soft Furnishings

Like vases of fresh flowers indoors, plants in containers provide strong accents of shape and color on your patio or deck, bringing life and color to your home. They are prima donnas, flaunting their vivid colors while they are in full glory.

More than anything else, the choice of plants-and the containers they are planted in-will affect the mood of the garden and the finished look. Group containers by color or create cameo gardens along a theme. Use an eclectic mix of containers or follow your decorating theme inside and bring it outdoors you have many choices in the style of pots that are on the market.

Create impact in the garden by color-theming seasonal planting to match the colors of your patio fixtures. This works best with plants in containers, as pots and planters can be chosen or painted to tone with walls and fences, then planted with flowers in complimentary colors.

YOUR GARDEN; YOUR DESIGN; YOUR SPACE

Few of us are totally content with our gardens. Despite the immense pleasure we derive from them, there’s always something that could be better. Most of us long for a larger garden, a few for something smaller and more manageable, but the vast majority of us have to make the best of our existing plot.

Gardening is about growing plants, but the setting in which we place them is probably the element that makes a garden appealing or otherwise. Tastes in gardening styles vary as much as in other aspects of living, and what appeals to one person may not appeal to another, but the test of a good garden design is whether it appeals to you. Have fun and enjoy!!

PS. Remember to leave some room for vegetable gardening in those pots and garden boxes. Our early summer Newsletter will give lots of tips on how to grow juicy tomatoes and other summer vegetables.. look for it in June.

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“ Success is simple. Do what is right,
the right way, at the right time. ”

FINDING THE RIGHT LOOK FOR YOUR WINDOW BOXES OR POTS

March is too early to put in annuals that will bloom all summer. You'll need to wait until early May for warmer weather and to make sure all danger of frost is past. By mid-April, nurseries will be full of choices that will perform all summer.

For now, you might want to put in some trailing, white or yellow variegated little-leafed ivy to hang down the front of the boxes, and top that off with primroses, corydalis, pansies or any other spring blooming perennials that catch your fancy at the nursery.

After these finish blooming, they can be transplanted (where they'll flower again next spring) or dispose of them, and it'll be time to replace them with annuals (the ivy can stay if it works with your summer planting scheme). You might consider trailing fuchsias or nasturtiums to drape down the front of the boxes; foliage plants like ferns or coleus to fluff up the mix; and long blooming annuals like verbena, petunias, impatiens or abutilons. Add in a few herbs, perhaps scented-leafed geraniums, for perfume and texture. If you prefer a cleaner look with less of the bouquet approach, you could fill the boxes with variegated hostas or an assortment of sedum.

HANGING BASKETS – HANGING GARDENS

When you want color high up in your patio or deck, whether it is to provide a focal point, frame a view or soften the hard lines of a wall or a building, the easiest way is to plant up a container and hang it up. An alternative to a conventional hanging basket is to design your planting so that the basket or container is made part of the display. Ordinary shopping baskets, buckets, agricultural containers, even kitchen equipment such as colanders, pots and pans with drainage holes drilled in the base, can all be used as hanging baskets with character.

Almost any interesting receptacle will make a container for plants; in fact, the more unusual it is, the more impact it will create. Once you begin to see the potential in tins, boxes, baskets and jars, you'll be motivated to create really original plantings.

ENJOYING YOUR GARDEN ROOM

To get the most pleasure from your garden, you need to make it a comfortable space to live in, whether it be a small intimate patio or balcony. The place where you want to spend your leisure time should be somewhere that combines all the best aspects of your garden: it will be well secluded, yet will have plenty to look at, perhaps with fragrant plants and a water feature.

Once you have created the perfect spot you will want to share it with others from time to time. Outdoor parties can be great fun, whether the event is a simple lunch, a birthday tea or a romantic dinner for two.

Lighting will help to create atmosphere, and offers lots of choices, from magical fairy lights to scented oil lamps or insect – repellant candles.

Theme your party table by decking it out in dusky ocean blues or vivid Mediterranean colors. As a final flourish, make an arrangement of sweet-smelling flowers or decorative garden produce for that just – right table centerpiece.

LIGHTING EFFECTS – GARDEN LIGHTING

Outdoor lighting will not achieve the same level of illumination as indoors, although this is rarely a problem: part of the appeal of being outside at night is the moody, shadowy lighting and being able to appreciate the moon and stars.

As well as the practical effects, such as showing changes of level or the edges of path, lighting also allows the best features of the garden to be highlighted while leaving others hidden, and brings the garden to life in a different and very special way. Your deck or patio is the perfect candidate for garden lighting.



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