

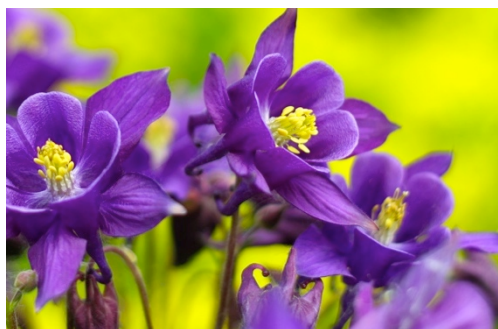
# How to Plan Your Own Garden



## Issue IX — Summer 2013



So you have always wanted to start your own garden, but never knew exactly where to begin? Well, now is the chance for you to pick up that shovel and start planning your new oasis by following our easy steps. Gardening is a fun and easy way to relieve stress and to enhance the beauty of a yard, front porch, windowsill, or office space. Here at Flora Garden Society, we take our gardening to the next level to provide inspiration for experienced gardeners, and we break down the steps for those who are just starting out. We walk you step-by-step of how to prepare the soil, make a layout map to visually represent your garden, and tips on how to properly plant flowers and seeds. Take a look at what's inside!



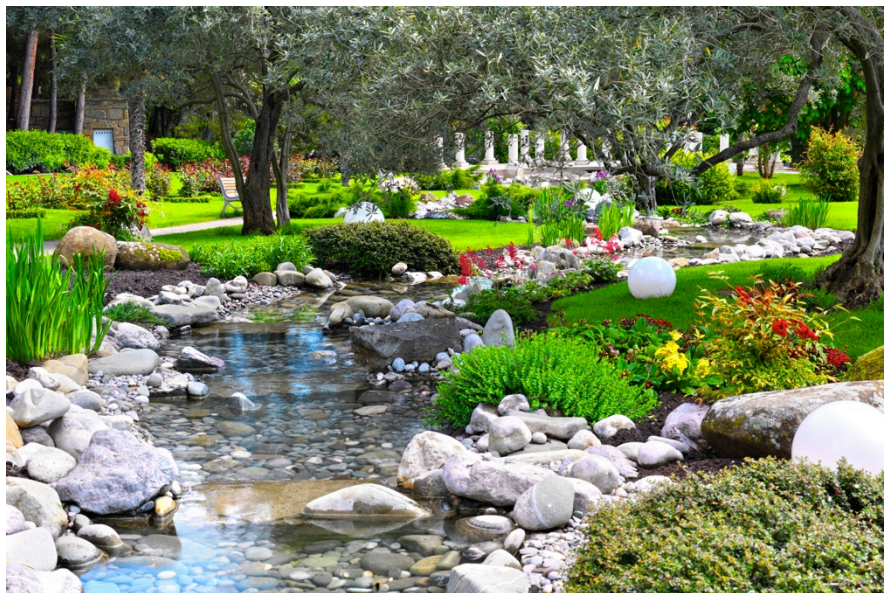
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# Get an Idea, Be Inspired



So you want to start your own garden? Congratulations that is the first step to becoming a gardener! Make your garden dreams come alive right before your eyes. Growing specific types of plants, flowers, and trees may take a little extra care, but it will be well worth it in the end.

To properly prepare your garden will depend on the type of garden you would like. Do you want a flourishing flower garden? If so, do you want to have annual flowers or seasonal flowers? What type of style or pattern do you wish to follow if any? Does the thought of going into your own backyard for fresh vegetables sound appealing? Then you might want to consider a vegetable garden or an herb garden. If you are looking for a low-maintenance garden, then you will want to stick to flowers such as the Shasta daisies that will come back bigger and better every year with little care. Also, take into consideration your gardening environment and weather to find plants that will thrive.



The next step is to get inspired by other gardens. Look at friends and families' gardens as well as extravagant gardens to get ideas. It's always fun to get a great idea from a local garden and transform it to suit your exact tastes and needs. One bit of advice, start small. You don't want become overwhelmed with a mammoth-sized garden because chances are you are not going to want maintain all of it day after day. The worst thing to do is to give up on your garden before it has a chance to blossom.



*Have you considered a vegetable garden?*





## Pick a Place

Evaluate your space that you want to garden in. Survey the land, and determine what type of soil you have. Where are the large trees and any obstacles in relation to your garden location? Is the soil fertile and full of nutrients to support plant life, or will you need to prepare it first? Will the land drain well? If your soil is not ready, don't become discouraged. You can use your current soil and add sand to make it looser and drier, or add clay to make the soil moist and firm.



*Soil should have a good mixture of sand, silt, clay, and organic material to support healthy plants.*



*You can also focus on potted plants in a fun container.*

Look for areas of the garden that receive good sunlight. Note how the sun moves across the land throughout the day. Many flowers and vegetables require at least six hours of full sun each day. If your lot does not have a lot of direct sunlight, don't worry. There are still many types of plants that can tolerate the shade. Keep this in mind when choosing your plants and check the tags or ask the staff to help you determine how much sun a plant requires before purchasing it.

Remember, you want to show off your garden. Don't put it off in the distance or blocked from direct sight. Consider where people will be walking and sitting to fully enjoy your hard work.



# Clear the Ground

Clearing the ground is a very important step in preparing your garden for success. First, clear any debris including sticks, little rocks, garbage, and leaves. Get rid of the sod covering the area you plan to plant by digging it out, or covering it with compost. You can also lay down sheet of newspaper and cover it with three inches of compost (or combination of potting soil and topsoil). It will take about four months for the compost and paper to decompose and you will be ready to start gardening with fresh soil.



*Be sure you have the proper gardening tools before you get started.*

Soil needs to be fertile to produce abundant vegetation. It is the foundation of all the flowers and plants and therefore should be rich with nutrients. Adding organic matter will boost your garden to reach its full potential. Good compost will increase the soil's organic matter, holding water and nutrients, creating a friendly environment for the plants. For best results, add many brown items such as leaves, paper, and woodchips. Don't forget to add some greens such as grass and food scraps.





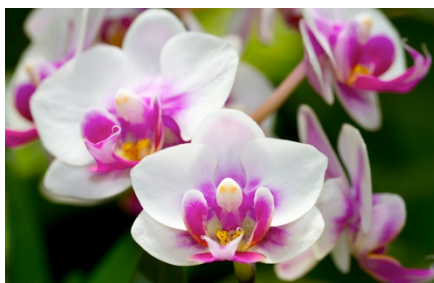
# Time to Pick the Plants



Now this is when the fun really begins, the time to select what you want to grow. At this point you already have a location picked out and an idea of what you want to do with the space. Now you get to filter through all the different species of plants and flowers to find that perfect blend of colors.

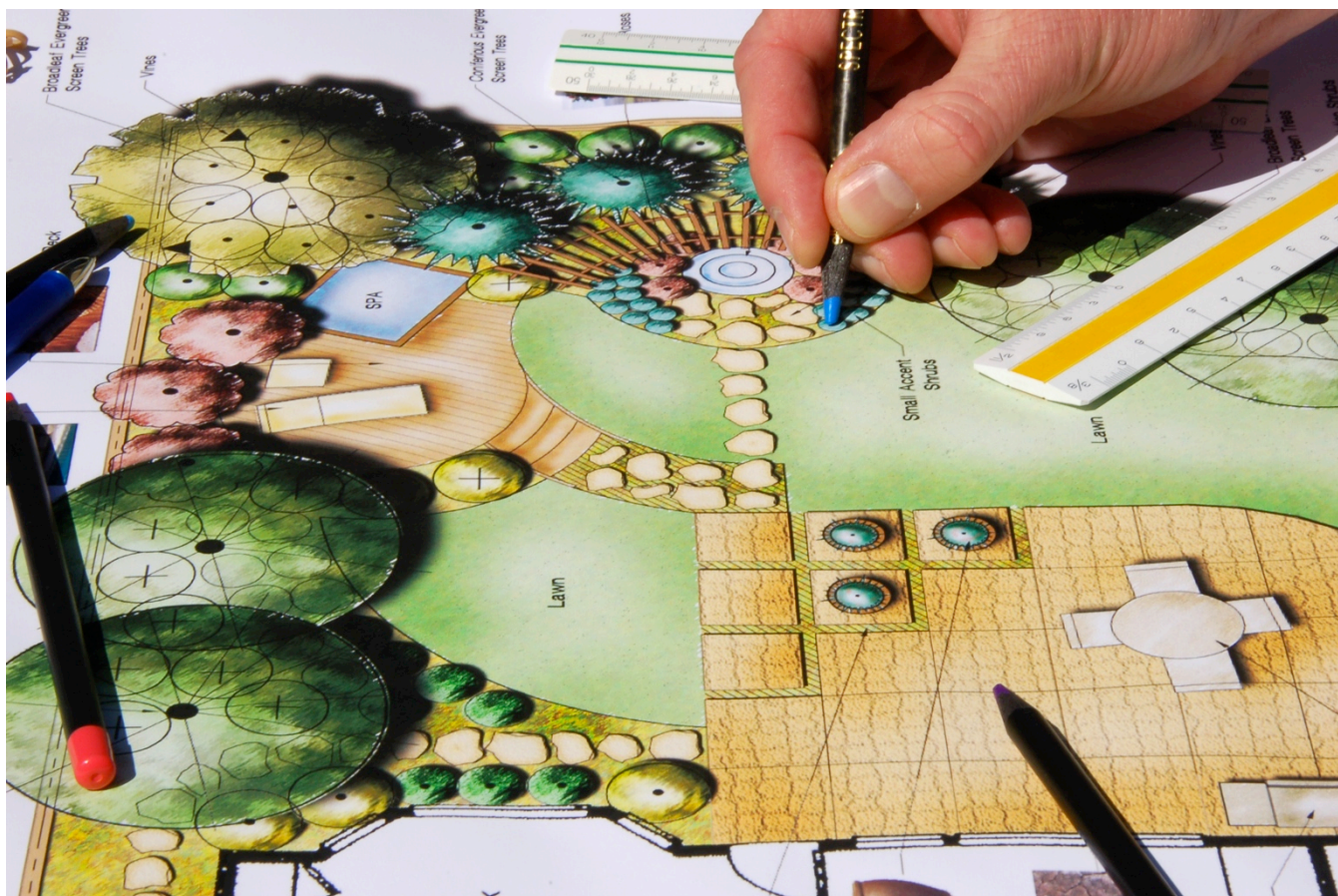
Some people like the hands on experience of searching through their local garden center to get up close and personal to smell the flowers and feel the textures. Others prefer to poke around through garden catalogs or surf the Internet. Either method works well, it just depends on your needs and the environment including the soil and sunlight exposure.

Here are a few easy-to-grow plants for beginners: marigolds, geraniums, calendula, sunflowers, lamb's-ears, pansies, daylilies, lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers.





# Layout Your Vision



It is very important to layout your design before you start digging. You already have a visual image of how you want things to look; now it's time to put it into place. If you have not yet made a mock-up drawing of your layout, it's a good start to get a sense of the size and location for each plant. Some find it easier to start with a drawing before they purchase the plants.

The next step is to actually sit the plants on top of the soil where they will be planted. This is a very helpful tool to make adjustments to your layout before anything is permanent. Of course, if you have seeds you will need to compromise and try to find something of similar size to take it's place. Reorder the plants as many times until you are satisfied. Remember to place the tallest plants in the back so they do not block and overshadow the shorter plants. Check the growth rate of each plant during your selection process so you will be aware of the top height of each plant and can plan accordingly.

Start by placing the largest plants in the back and working your way forward, filling in the gaps. Bedding flowers are best used to fill in the front, while taller shrubs are good to fill wide-open spaces. After everything is in place, take a picture for later reference.







## Start Planting

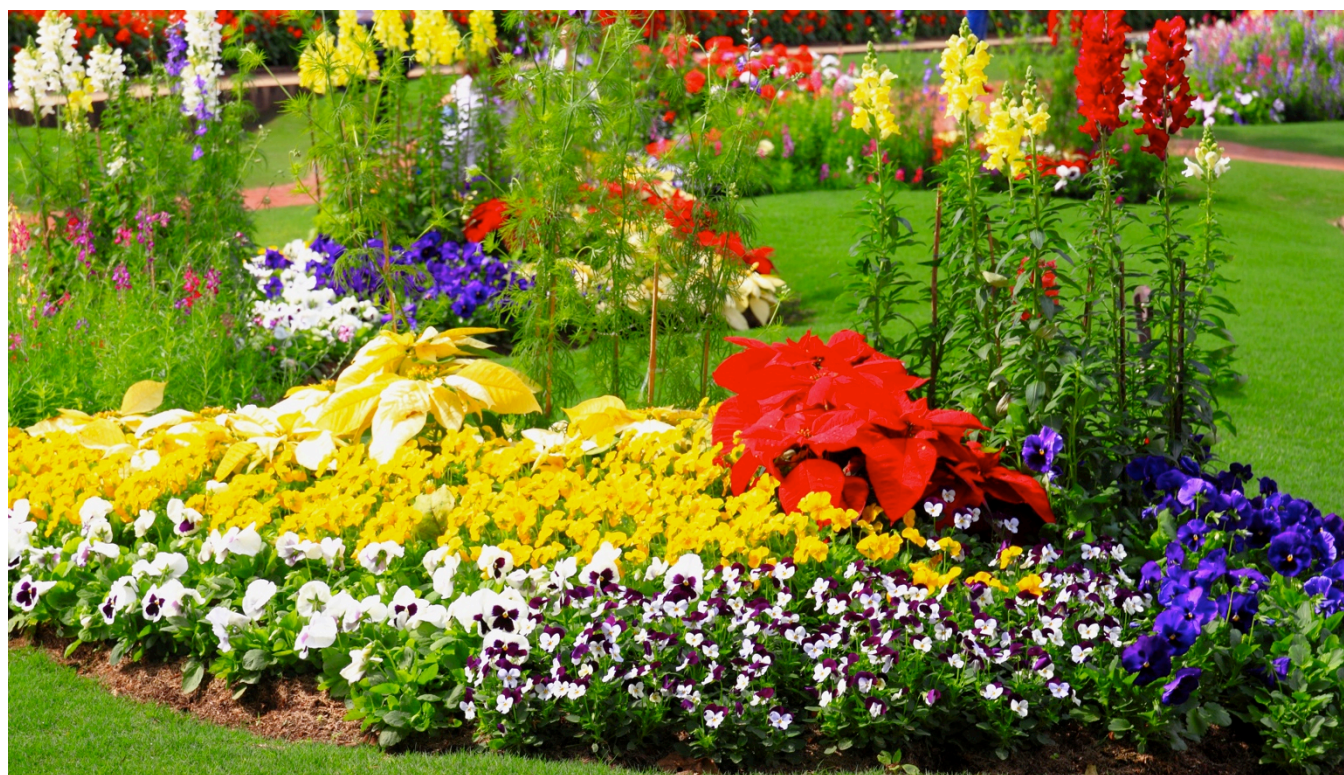
This is when you really get to see your garden come to life! Begin by removing the plants from the areas you will be working on first. Don't worry because you still have a photo of the layout to use as a reference point. Dig a round hole for the plants. The size of the hole will depend on the type of plant. Be sure to read ahead of time about the flowers and plants about the best time to plant, how deep to plant, and how far apart to plant the seeds. For seeds, a general rule of thumb is to plant them about three inches underground and cover them completely with fresh soil. If you are planting young plants, called set plants or transplants, firmly hold the plant by the roots while supporting the stem and lower it into the soil. Continue to plant from the back towards the front, and look for big holes or gaps that need to be filled.



Some plants can tolerate cold weather, so you can plant them in autumn or late winter. On the other hand, most annual flowers are sensitive to cold temperatures, so don't plant them until the weather improves. Generally, spring and autumn are good seasons to begin your garden. You can always check with your local garden center for a list of recommended planting dates.



Congratulations! You have now officially started your own garden. However, the work has just begun. Don't forget to water your garden often and give it a healthy trimming from time to time. Share your new oasis with family and friends.

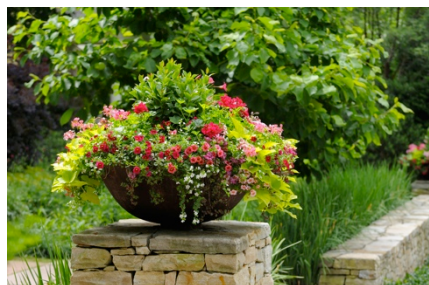




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# Look for Our Next Issue On:

## Container Gardens and Potted Plants



Enhance your landscape with custom container gardens that are simple to install and easy to maintain. Learn how to choose the right planter or how to create stunning hanging baskets. The most important step is to have good potting soil with proper watering habits.



Potted plants are ideal for indoor settings or confined locations. Learn about stunning low-budget containers or household items that can be easily transformed into unique and creative pots. Almost anything can be used as a gardening container; it just depends on your style and budget.



Gardening in small spaces can be a real challenge. However, we have comprised tips and tricks on how to have a welcoming environment with smaller plants. Spice up small areas with green shrubbery and potted plants for a clean and fresh look that is inviting for others.



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