



Plant a Garden for a Lifetime of Enjoyment

Gardening – One of America’s Favorite Pastimes

By: Rich Schell

This is the time of year that my green thumbs starting itching like crazy! Since childhood, I have enjoyed plants and flowers, gardening, and anything to do with growing things.

Soon after the first frost, I mourn the loss of all that I watched grow . . . all that I’ve collected and planted with love, and, usually, have spent way too much money on! I like to purchase 6-packs, quarts, and gallon pots from all of my favorite garden centers – it seems to complete me! But, I’m also, at some level, slightly relieved when I finally have a break from the nearly constant care of my garden which includes worrying about drought, fear of hailstorms, and watering, along with more watering!

Yet, I sign up with zest and total glee once again, in anticipation of saying ‘hello’ to my faithful perennials, as well as the rest of my summer guests, including ones I’ve yet to meet . . . flowers yet to be discovered!

This year I’m already scheming and have scheduled to have some beds redone, with some additional work to create welcome changes to what I’ve been nurturing the past 16 years since moving to this home. I’ve gone from lots of flowers to adding more shrubs and bushes. I like these for their ability to remain green all winter or bloom seasonally. I don’t usually place a plant in the garden that remains only green, with the exception of boxwoods or pines. I want them to flower or have amazing fall foliage! Currently, I’m on a quest



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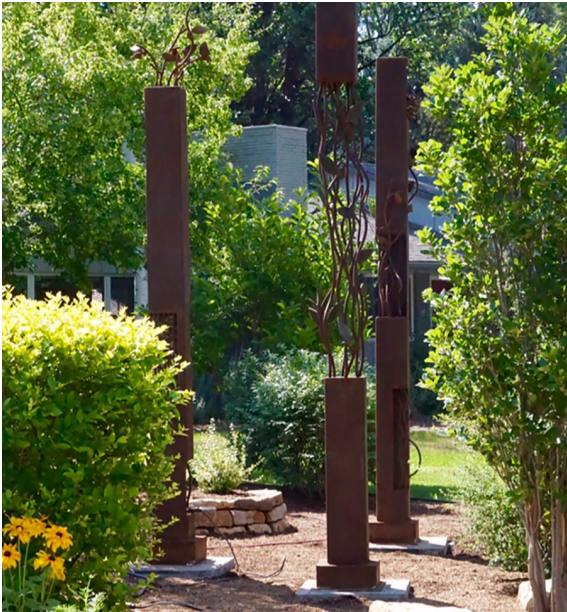
for simplicity in my gardens, as my yard is just over a ½ acre, and it has begun to become almost more than I can handle alone. I admit I have a yard crew for the lawn and trimming, but the gardens are all me! From the planting and maintenance to the pruning and weeding, and the ever-present worry of the ravages of nature. "First world problems," right? I will say that gardening is one of the best exercise options out there! Each year I drop several pounds and use muscles that I forgot I had.

Here in Colorado, we have a very short growing season, Weather will be good and we'll declare, "Spring is here!" But it always seems we can get those late-season frosts that stop your heart at the end of May. So, it's best to use caution. Don't place non-hardy plants outside until mid to late May. The general rule to start planting in Colorado is Memorial Day, and the end of the season is anyone's guess! I've had frosts as early as mid-September, but on the other hand, have also made it past Halloween! The latter, of course, is my preferred choice of when to put the flowerbeds away for the winter.

This season my goal is to plant even more trees and evergreens that make for a spectacular year-round garden. The winter interest must be as exuberant as the summer! I love to add color to my garden with many varieties of annuals, as well as impatiens, petunias, zinnias, dahlias, and begonias, to name several - you'll always find these in my beds and pots too! Speaking of pots, I have way too many! But, again, I like to mix it up in my pots with a boxwood or small dwarf Alberta spruce - again, for winter interest. But it also takes up a lot of the pot's 'real estate,' so as not to spend a fortune each year on the remaining space to fill them up! One of the tasks I complete at the start of each growing season is to remove half of the soil from my pots and then, amend the soil in my garden beds. Additional soil is inexpensive enough to give the pots a fresh start and an amazing summer of fabulous growth.

As I set about on my quest this year, I'm on the search for interesting succulents, unusual begonias, and cool seeds. It's fun to plant a pot with seeds. They come up very well and often in varieties you'd never find in a 6-pack - available only as seeds! Especially impressive vines!

Do yourselves a favor. Even if you do not have a huge and glorious garden, plant up a few pots with some flowers for your porch, patio, or balcony and plan to enjoy the summer watching them grow! Become a part of one of America's most favorite pastimes. You won't regret it!



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