



SUMMER GARDENING

A PERFECTLY CRAFTED GUIDE ALL ABOUT SUMMER GARDENING

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Introductory

One thing that is often overlooked when planning and creating a beautiful summer garden for homeowners to enjoy is the fact that the garden exists throughout the year.

Unfortunately, in the vast majority of summer gardens there is a huge hole in the garden for the vast majority of the year. Carefully planning in order to avoid this process and planting flowering plants that bloom during various seasons of the year as well as plants that provide beautiful foliage and greenery even when the flowers may not be blooming can prevent this absence of life within your summer garden from occurring.

Plant continuously and groom your garden consistently throughout the year. Obviously, the winter months are not great months for planting in the earth but this doesn't mean that you cannot use flowerpots filled with seasonal offerings to fill the gaps of green within your garden.

There are all kinds of flowers that thrive in winter weather that would make a beautiful addition to your winter garden without taking anything away from the beauty of your summer garden. In fact, the ability to incorporate these flowers and plants into your garden without necessarily planting may be an excellent incentive to keep your garden up to date even in seasons that aren't traditionally thought of as gardening seasons.

Add features to your garden that aren't plant related to bring splashes of color to your garden during winter months while preserving the space needed for planting your summer garden when the appropriate time comes.

Flowerpots are a great example of this but so are lawn ornaments and statues that may be either moved to a different location during summer months or removed all together. Keep the earth warm for the summer garden to come during those long cold winter months.

Use the winter months to plan your summer garden. The spring is often spent in preparation and the fall months are spent harvesting. The winter months would be put to excellent use planning the new additions and possible movements that need to occur in the coming months. Working on

your garden and improving your garden does not necessarily require working in your garden. Once you have those gaps filled in and a little bit of green and color in your garden for the winter months you can focus your undivided attention on making the coming summer garden even better and more spectacular than ever before.

Be careful not to plant all of your seeds in one garden spot so to speak while you are making your plans. By this I mean you need to keep a certain willingness to make adjustments and corrections as you go and learn more about the growing process and the specific gardening needs of your yard.

Every growing season will bring a season of new lessons to learn take the time to reflect upon the lessons learned during previous seasons when making plans for the coming seasons and make the adjustments that present themselves along the way.

By learning from the mistakes of the past and always looking to and anticipating the needs of the future you are insuring greater success each year for your summer garden not only during the dog days of summer but throughout all the seasons of the year.

Chapter 1: Colorful Summer Garden Flowers

If flowers are your thing or if you plan to include some flowers in your summer garden then you should take a moment to learn about those flowers or flowering plants that are best suited to summer months and what those plants like by way of sunlight and shade.

Not all flowers are created equal when it comes to withstanding the heat of the summer sun and some require a little more care than others. Keep all of these things in mind when planning your summer garden and choose wisely according to the type of care you wish to provide.

This is a general guide to the various types of plants that are well suited for a summer garden and not necessarily those that are well suited to rest side by side. Study the flowers you decide you would like to include in your summer garden in order to insure you keep those that love water and dislike sun away from those that thrive with little water and copious amounts of sun.

In other words, you will need to conduct a more thorough study of the flowers you decide to include in your summer garden in order to determine the proper placement of these flowers for the most color, effect, and the best possible life for the flowers you choose.

The following are some fun sun loving flowers you may wish to include in your summer garden. Geraniums are bright little splashes of color that are ideally suited for a summer garden. They happen to work well for creating borders or simply providing a highlight of color in a bed of green and do quite well in pots on their own or mixed with other colorful summer flowers.

The Hibiscus is a beautiful spot of color that will lend a tropical feel to your summer garden. A welcome addition to many gardens they may grow quite tall so keep them to the back of the summer garden to allow the full array of color from all summer plants to capture the eyes of visitors. Marigolds are another popular addition to most summer gardens. With a wide array of colors from which to choose it is no small wonder that these flowers remain a popular favorite for sunny patches within the summer garden.

Shade loving flowers also abound for summer gardens everywhere. Most gardeners find heavily shaded spots within their lawns or gardens to be a particular challenge. Perhaps some of these suggestions will alleviate that sense of challenge for you. Impatiens are widely popular choices for shady spaces and provide a wide range of bright colors perfect for creating fun and bright borders.

The viola is another great brightly colored flower that is well suited for borders or potted arrangements, whichever suits your particular summer garden needs. Mimulus is another excellent choice for color in your summer garden and may tolerate partial sun quite well if you're looking for a nice border plant. If you prefer more dramatic coloring in your summer garden you might be interested in including Lobelia or ageratum, which both have beautiful blue hues in your summer garden plans.

Of course, this is only a small sampling of the many bright and beautiful summer flowers that can make a real splash in your summer garden. Be sure to check out the color offerings of each and specific care instructions to make sure that they are a genuine match not only for your personal tastes but also the landscape and terrain of your garden and the other plants that will be included in your summer garden.

The planning stage is often the hardest work that many people put into their summer gardens but the payoff for all this proper planning is quite often rich and beautiful. Failing to plan properly can result in a great deal of wasted time and effort on your behalf and a less than stellar summer garden.

Chapter 2: Building a Summer Garden with Kids

We love our children and we want to teach them to value the things that are important to us.

These things include morals, integrity, ingenuity, and an appreciation for the things in life that we consider beautiful and worth expending our energy, time, and effort in order to create. One of those things that many of us love sharing with our children is our love of gardening.

Whether you are creating a spectacular garden worthy of acclaim, fame, and blue ribbons everywhere or a simple garden that will hold pretty flowers and a few favorite vegetables there are many lessons that your children can learn from working the earth by your side.

The first, and perhaps best, lesson that most children learn when working in the garden is that life works in cycles. This is an important lesson for children, as it is a lesson that will be repeated often throughout the course of their lives.

Of course, this is only one of the many lessons that gardening will teach but gardening is one of the kindest ways I've ever seen this particular lesson learned and it helps ease children into those times when lessons about the cycle of life are not so kindly or gently presented.

The next lesson that gardening teaches children is that persistent effort often pays out with delightful results. Whether their gardening efforts yielded sweet peppers or pretty flowers, there is often a desired result that is achieved through gardening.

If you really want to capture your children's attention when it comes to gardening choose a fast-growing plant for their first gardening experience. The ability to see the fruits of their labor quickly appear is often one of the greatest gifts we can give our children.

If you want to guide your children towards the path of creating a summer garden without quite the fanfare or responsibility you may want to begin

simply-perhaps with a potted plant or a hanging tomato plant or something similar that will yield visible and tasty results with much less effort, time, or attention being required in order to achieve quick and enthusiastic results.

Be sure to point out interesting facts about the different plants in your garden that may be exciting to children to learn. Remember your first gardening experiences and share them with your children. You may be surprised to find how much you have in common with your children when it comes to ideas and enthusiasm concerning summer gardens.

When planning a summer garden with kids you need to consider all of the things you would consider when planning other summer gardens but relate those things to pint sized hands and sponge-like minds. Kids soak up every ounce of information we provide them at an alarming rate. Be careful that you aren't teaching them incorrect logic when it comes to gardening and growing beautiful summer plants.

More importantly, you should make a concerted effort to ensure that you are teaching your children the positive aspects of gardening so that this becomes an activity they look to for enjoyment and pleasure rather than approaching with dread.

You should also take great pains to ensure that you allow your children to grow the things they will like in your summer garden too. Strawberries and watermelon are popular favorites for younger hands to grow because little mouths enjoy eating these delicious fruits that can be grown in most gardens. They also like to grow flowers that they can tend and watch throughout the summer if flowers are your summer garden calling rather than food.

When gardening with children there are many lessons that you can teach your children along the way. Science, math, and meteorology all have roles in gardening but you should also be on the lookout for the valuable lessons that your children can teach you about gardening and life in general when you take them out to work with you in your summer garden.

Chapter 3: Creating a Summer Garden on a Budget

Summer gardening can quickly escalate into an expensive undertaking if you do not enter into the prospect with certain and very specific budget constraints in mind.

If you plan according to your budget and purchase according to your specific plans and needs you are likely to find that your summer garden is more budget friendly than the vast majority of other summer gardens on the block. I hope the advice that follows will help you cut the expense of summer garden and help you find budget friendly ways to build the summer garden of your dreams.

Do not buy what you do not need. It doesn't matter how good the deal if you do not need the seeds, tools, and various other items there is no real reason to purchase them. It is a waste of money that could be better spent elsewhere to spend money that doesn't need to be spent.

Don't pay for shipping if it can be avoided. You may find a few items cheaper online but be very aware of the costs involved in shipping. If it costs more when all is said and done than it would have cost to purchase the same items locally you haven't saved anything at all.

Look at the big picture rather than seeing only the cheaper asking price. It is also a good idea to support small local businesses whenever possible as they are going to be more likely to bargain, barter, and throw in freebies.

Check locally for free composting materials. Many communities offer these free to residents. When compared with the expense of purchasing these materials the savings can be significant over the course of a summer.

Work out an exchange among gardening friends. This is a great way to incorporate new plants into your summer garden without purchasing each plant you wish to include. This is a great way to make new gardening friends, share a passion, and save money. It's a win win situation for most gardeners who are constantly waging war on the high costs that can be involved in gardening.

Select plants that are native to your area for your summer garden. This is a huge money saver that is often overlooked. The costs of non-native plants can be excessive in the best of circumstances and the added care incurs further costs. Keep costs down by selecting plants that will easily thrive in your climate and those that are locally cultivated.

This isn't an all or nothing proposition of course. If you absolutely love a couple of non-native plants, by all means incorporate them into your garden. However, if you are planning a garden from scratch choose as many native plants as possible for filler.

Check your local classified ads and free-cycle program for used garden tools that are in good condition. There are many reasons that people sell or give away garden tools and a bargain is a bargain on these tools that are going to be used to play in the dirt.

You do not need to be incredibly picky about the tools you purchase and saving money is almost always a good thing. It's even better, of course, when you get them for no cost at all. You also might find a few free plants available through these sources too.

Mulching saves time and money. Really! It saves water to mulch because the mulch holds the moisture in. This lowers the cost of watering and eliminates many of the pesky weeds that crop up-which saves time. We all know that time is money and most of us despise weeding unless we have some truly aggressive emotions to work through that is.

By using all of the steps above you should find that you have saved a good deal of money in the planning and growing of your summer garden. Combine them with tips of your own that you discover along the way and next summer your garden should cost even less.

Chapter 4: Furnishing Your Summer Garden

Once you've made all the really tough decisions about which plants, flowers, and vegetables to include in your summer garden you now have the pleasant task of making yet another decision: what type of furniture should go in your summer garden.

This is no small decision and should not be taken lightly as it will ultimately affect your enjoyment of the garden you worked so hard to create.

While there are many people who are content to rush to the local home and garden store and pick out whatever is on sale at the moment, this seems hardly worth of someone who would go to all the time, effort, and careful planning to create a beautiful summer garden in which they wish to sit and enjoy the effects of his or her hard effort.

In fact, the furniture that is ultimately selected for the summer garden should be furniture that is meant to last several years. For this reason, you need to invest a little more time and effort into selecting the best possible furniture for your summer garden.

The furniture you choose for your summer garden is going to be a personal choice. If possible try to choose enough furniture to accommodate those guests that you feel will frequently enjoy dining in your garden. If you plan to host a wide range of barbecues and garden parties you will want plenty of garden furniture to accommodate those needs.

If you are only going to have immediate family then the typical arrangements for a family should suffice. Be sure that there are seating options available for occasional guests even if there aren't dining options readily available.

Once you've decided how many will be enjoying your garden area and in need of seating arrangements you may want to discuss and decide what type of seating arrangements are needed most. The man of the house might expect a hammock and while teenaged girls and the lady of the house may expect lounge chairs in which they can enjoy the full warmth of the sun's

rays on lazy summer days within your summer garden. Another common expectation for appropriate furnishing in a summer garden is a swing or a glider of some sort in which couples may sit and inspect the splendor of their creations.

You should also include your normal flare for design when selecting your summer garden furniture. You want the furniture you select for your garden to be furniture that you find enjoyable and beautiful as well as comfortable. No one wants to sit in uncomfortable furniture for any length of time and most people do not feel comfortable in furniture that they find ugly.

One other thing you will want to consider when selecting furniture for your summer garden area is how well it is made to withstand the abuse that Mother Nature often provides.

You will want to select furniture that can withstand the summer time heat naturally but also that can handle the cold of winter and the ravages of water and bugs that often love to make a feast of outdoor furniture. Buy with all these things in mind and you should have furniture for your summer garden that is sure to delight and please all that enter your garden area. More importantly, you should have furniture that you enjoy.

Chapter 5: An Organic Summer Garden Experience

If you have the time and the inclination to create an organic summer garden there are few better ways to go when it comes to the potential impact on the planet.

A summer garden is a thing of beauty to be enjoyed by all you invite into your garden. That being said, there are certain pests we'd all like to keep out of our gardens as well. The problem is that the pesticides of the past have undetermined side effects that have the potential to cause lasting harm.

If we can avoid introducing those chemicals to our own gardens we are protecting our kids from dangers we may not even be aware of yet and protecting the other animals that may innocently come in contact with our gardens such as birds and butterflies from being harmed by the chemicals present in most common pesticides.

What does this mean to gardeners when it comes to efforts directed towards keeping out potential pests? Quite honestly, it means we are going to have to get a little bit creative in those efforts turning to natural solutions rather than chemicals.

One way in which this can quite easily be accomplished is by encouraging animals that prey upon the pests to make your garden their home. Of course, this could potentially bring about its own set of problems but from a gardening perspective it is often very sound reasoning.

Use organic mulch. While this isn't necessarily a means of pest control it is a wise move when it comes to organic gardening. Not only does the mulch provide the very useful mulching properties throughout the growing season but once the growing season has ended can be turned over and used in order to boost the organic material within the soil. This in turns provides nutrients that are important to keeping the soil fit for sustaining plant life in future growing seasons.

Attract birds to your garden. This has a two-fold benefit for the organic gardener. First of all the birds are often natural predators for many of the bugs that make a nuisance of themselves in the average summer garden. Second, birds leave behind their own little fertilizing additions to the landscape of your garden. Don't you wish all solutions were this simple?

Keep your garden healthy, well fertilized, watered regularly and appropriately, and free of weeds. A good offense is the best defense. A good immune system and constant hand washing are the best defense the human body has against catching colds and viruses.

The same holds true for gardens and their ability to fight pests. Keep your garden strong and healthy and it will repel many of the pests that may cripple other gardens on its own. It certainly doesn't hurt anything to keep this philosophy in mind and you may be amazed at how well it works.

Organic gardening is more than a plan for your garden it is a return to the ways of old in the world of gardening. For centuries before pesticides were created man managed to live off the abundance of his gardens. It makes sense that by returning to those ideals we can also enjoy great food and a bountiful harvest in the modern world.

Make the choice today to make your summer garden an organic garden and reap the benefit in better health and greater enjoyment of the gardening process.

Chapter 6: Decorating Your Summer Garden

Most people spend a great deal of time planning the landscape, flowers, and greenery of their summer gardens but very little time planning the decorative items that will make this little spot of heaven on earth even more enjoyable for man, woman, child, and pet.

There are many things that can add to your comfort when enjoying your summer garden but here is a list of things you might want to seriously consider including in your own personal oasis from the world.

A hammock. There really can't be enough said about the value that a well-placed hammock in your summer garden will add to the enjoyment of your time spent in the great outdoors. This is particularly true, for some unknown reason, for men.

There is something about hanging a hammock that says this place is home to a man and this should not be overlooked when creating the outdoor place, you wish to share together.

Wind chimes. There is something soothing about listening to the wind making music in your garden. Whether you are enjoying a nap in your hammock, catching some rays on a lounge chair or simply sitting outside reading a book and sipping some tea the sound of wind weaving a melody through the chimes is a very enjoyable sound.

Seating. While most men will argue that a hammock is all they need most women cannot find outdoor comfort by hammock alone. Hammocks are also woefully inadequate seating when there are crowds larger than two involved in most cases.

For this reason, it is nice to have plenty of seating in your garden area so that friends and family may enjoy seeing the results of your effort along with you. Select seating that is fitting of your great tastes and that is comfortable for the best possible results.

Flowerpots. While your summer garden may be filled with flowers, plants, bushes, trees, fruits, and vegetables there is rarely the occasion when there is too much color in a summer garden. Fill large flowerpots with impatiens or similar flowering plants and place them strategically around the seating area for a beautiful affect that brings the beauty of your summer garden well onto your patio or deck. The same thing may be accomplished on a larger scale with a few well-placed raised garden beds or a few climbing vines.

Water features. There is not enough that can be said about the drama and elegance that a water feature can bring to the average summer garden. Whether you elect to include a fountain, waterfall, or goldfish pond the additional value and enjoyment it provides to your garden is almost impossible to measure.

Water features are a rather significant investment in your garden area but well worth the money you will invest when it comes to return on investment. Your family and your friends will appreciate the effect that this brings to your summer garden.

Many may consider their summer gardens decoration enough. However, a few small decorative touches can mean the different between a summer garden that is nice to stroll through and a summer garden that invites everyone to sit a while and enjoy the effort you've contributed to the creation of this little slice of your world.

Plan your summer garden carefully and you too will have this reaction every time you walk through it.

Chapter 7: Growing Vegetables in Your Summer Garden

As a child, I remember many sunny summer afternoons sitting on the porch shelling more than my fair share of peas and butter beans in the deep dark heart of the old south.

There were other vegetables we grew in our summer gardens that had to be picked and stored for winter but the peas and butter beans always seemed to take the most time and attention and are one of the things I sorely miss having left my home in the south for much cooler climes.

One thing though, has never gotten away from me and that is the deep and abiding love I have for the smell of freshly plowed soil and the taste of vegetables fresh from the garden.

I point out the fact that my childhood favorite summer garden vegetables only seem to flourish in the south to drive home the fact that you really will need to research the vegetables you plant in your summer garden as they relate to the specific area in which you live.

Not all vegetable plants are created equal in their tolerance for temperature or rainfall (or lack thereof), which could greatly impact their suitability for your particular vegetable summer garden depending of course, on where you are located.

Some great plants to include in your summer vegetable garden should of course be dictated by those vegetables that you enjoy eating as well as those vegetables and herbs that use a good deal when cooking. If you use peppers a lot in your cooking then peppers are probably an excellent choice for your summer garden.

If you don't like peppers, then they are not likely to be a good choice, as they will probably be wasted. My children will eat green peppers off the vine so they make an excellent choice for our garden. Tomatoes are another popular favorite for summer gardens. Some have even gotten creative and created hanging tomato plants in which the tomatoes literally grow upside down. If space is limited in your summer garden this may be a great way to

have your tomatoes and grow them too-without taking up valuable real estate within your vegetable garden.

For those who love their greens summer gardens provide an excellent atmosphere for growing greens such as broccoli, lettuce, and cabbage. Collard greens, mustard greens, and turnip greens are also good summer garden inclusions. I also have strong memories of boiling huge vats of greens to be frozen for winter when the full force of the harvest was upon us.

There was always something to be done with the vegetables as winter approached and during those lean winter months we were so grateful for the hard work and effort we had made to insure these great vegetables would sustain us during the months they weren't so readily available.

Having a summer garden filled with vegetables is a satisfying pursuit in many ways. First of all, you are producing something that is useful to you and your family. Second, you are providing a way for you and your family to enjoy the vegetables you love most throughout the year.

Finally, you are able to produce vegetables that are fit for consumption and enjoyment at a much lower cost than you would pay for these vegetables at the local supermarket. This helps save money for some of the more important and more entertaining things most of us would like to do with our families.

As with any summer garden you will need to plan carefully the placement of your vegetables and do some research on individual watering and shade requirements. It helps to plant those that need partial sunlight in the shadow of those plants that will grow taller and provide shade for the smaller plants.

It also helps to keep the thirstier plants closer together and further away from those plants that require less water to sustain them. You should also take care to be realistic in your planting and avoid planting more than you can comfortably consume or harvest, as that will be wasted time and effort on your part.