



Garden Tips

When Summer's Over: Take Inventory of the Garden

*"This such a great time to do an inventory of the past summer's garden. It is still fresh in your mind and change is a good thing."
Martha Stewart*

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When summer is over, take inventory of your garden. Among the things you can do: Check your soil, be inspired by new ideas, and strive for simplicity.

Soil

Soil is the foundation of the garden, and getting the proper nutrients is important. Does your garden need more than just fertilizing? You are going to get tired of my saying this, but please get your soil tested. If the soil is lacking, all those beautiful plants that have cost a lot will not do their best. Now is the time to test and you'll have all winter long for added nutrients to work into the soil. The Agricultural Extension Center on Rte. 6 in Bethel, CT, has a pamphlet with instructions. Their number is 203-207-3261.

Composting and mulching does wonders. You don't have to have compost in the yard. Garden centers sell compost in 40-pound bags, and there is a variety of mulches. Mulch is not just for looking nice, but cuts down on weeding, holds moisture in and helps regulate temperature.

New Ideas

What did you notice in other gardens that you liked, and could you apply it to yours?

I have noticed that people are using more grasses in their yards. Some of the grasses tend to get very tall and large. Be careful in planning out where you are going to place them—they tend to get out of control. They are great to use as a screen (instead of a hedge) and they work well in large open spaces. When planning, you may want to choose some of the shorter and slower growing varieties.

Grasses in the proper place are very pleasing to the eye. Grasses could be used as simple background plantings. They are beautiful in the winter, with their tall reeds full of snow, and they provide seeds for the birds all winter long.

Here are a few types of grasses. For more varieties and images, Google "images, ornamental grasses."



Acorus (also known as Sweet Flag) This is a grass-like perennial. Golden and green variegated foliage, 6-12" high



Andropogon (Big Bluestem). Powder blue foliage, red-orange fall color, likes it hot and dry. 5-8' tall



Miscanthus (Japanese Silver grass). There are several varieties, 3'-8' tall.



Carex (Sedge grass). Comes in a variety of colors; stays short, 6"-3' high.



Festuca (Fescue grass). Soft, powdery-blue spiky foliage; wheat-like inflorescences emerge 10-12" high.

Simplicity

Order in planning out the garden is important so there is simplicity. This past spring I planted some dinner-plate dahlias in the wrong places, and I am constantly staking them up. They are beautiful, but they need to be in a better spot. So next spring they need to be planted next to a stone wall or changed to a different variety for the fence.

It might be the time to have fewer perennials and work in small trees and shrubs. They add definition and height. They take up space so there is less work to be done. I would like to suggest some of the Viburnums and Hydrangeas. Some of the Viburnums are native to Connecticut.

I love every season, and it all gets away from me. Gardening is endless, and there are always improvements for next year. Learning what works well and how is part of being a gardener. Enjoy your gardens.