

Getting Ready for Next Year

by Patty Neas, Master Gardener

Taking a walk around the fall flower garden can be bittersweet. It brings the joy of the present stroll, dreams of next year with its hope and promise, as well as the sadness of the end of the flowering season. At the same time, we can contemplate what worked and what to change. There are many sources of inspiration from which to draw. Hopefully, you kept a journal, plant labels, and photos of what you have and notes about how plants did over the season.

What are some questions you should ask as you look around your garden? Last winter's freeze caused a lot of havoc with this year's gardens. This summer's heavy rains, storms and hail may have resulted in lost trees, and damaged plants. As a result, you could have a good deal of yard and flower bed damage to repair. Unexpectedly, there may be a sunny spot where you had shade before. What can be done now or later to have a pleasing design in the wake of this garden disaster? What can we do if we have lost or damaged shrubs? Cutting the damaged shrubs back aids new growth as you wait for them to regain their size. Or maybe you just replace the damaged shrubs.

What plantings didn't do well this year and why? Perhaps you need to move, remove, or add some plants. Did plants that reseed take over your garden? Get those out before they drop more seeds for next year. You can share extra plants with friends and neighbors or at plant swaps.

Does your fall garden lack color? What is blooming now that will add that needed color and brighten up your garden? Copy something you saw on your scouting trips and loved. Repeat plants that already look great and are working well in your garden now. A large sweep of color not only attracts pollinators but becomes a beautiful focal point in your garden. What annuals, perennials and shrubs are blooming now that you can add for next year?

Where do we get ideas and reliable information for our gardening? We can get inspiration from looking through current magazines, gardening catalogs, and landscaping books. An afternoon drive through local sub-divisions with so many landscapes to enjoy brings with it plant and design ideas for next year's fall garden! What annuals and bulbs do you see? What looks good together? How have homeowners put colors, textures, size together in a pleasing way? Will that blend well with the plantings and colors you already have in place? Continue to research plants for all growing seasons including those with winter interest. Adding bulbs this fall will add beauty to your landscape this spring. Ideas and needs begin to coalesce as you research. At the end of this article are publications that may help with your decision making.

Decide on your goals from the information and ideas you have gathered on your drives and research. Remember no matter how much you love the gardening ideas you have, limit yourself to what you will be physically able to do each year. Consider a redesign to create a lower maintenance garden. Make your decisions based on what works in your garden and what needs you have at this time. Keeping your garden growing beautifully every year includes lots of work! Gardening is hopeful and joyful; take the bittersweet with the good and keep on going!

Whatever you decide to do, you could benefit physically and emotionally by being outdoors, especially in a garden. *Happy gardening!*

PUBLICATIONS:

Plants for Tennessee Landscapes: Bulbs for the Garden

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/D140.pdf>

Flowering Bulbs for Tennessee Gardens

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/pb1610.pdf>

Plants for Tennessee Landscapes: Seed Grown Flowers for the Garden

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/D139.pdf>

Perennials for Tennessee Landscapes

https://plantsciences.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2021/11/Plants-for-Tennessee-landscapes_Perennials-UT-Publication-W874-B.pdf

Shrubs for East Tennessee

<https://eastern.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/62/2020/02/MG-Day-Shrubs-Info.pdf>

Twelve Common Landscape Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W175.pdf>

Tennessee Native Rain Garden Plant Recommendations

<https://tnyards.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/2022/03/Tennessee-Rain-Garden-Plant-Recommendations-1.pdf>

Gardening for health: a regular dose of gardening

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334070/>

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, “ASK A MASTER GARDENER” to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.