

Garden Ideas That Are Always in Bloom

Al Fresco Dining in the Garden



A garden can take on many forms — from a rolling landscape to a single terra-cotta pot resting comfortably on a terrace. Bringing plants into your life can be a calming hobby, a serious passion or an enjoyed career. Part of the fun of growing beautiful blooms and foliage is sharing your results with others. Impromptu garden parties or dining al fresco with friends is an inviting way to enjoy your cultivated nature. See how a garden patio can take on a different feel outside of a city apartment (left) or a provincial home (right). Photos courtesy of "Breaking Ground" (Artisan), by Page Dickey.

From Weary to Wow With Little Work

(MS) — This season, pay attention to your garden borders. By installing edging around landscape beds, your yard can go from "weary" to "wow" with just a little work.

Edging helps to form clean, neat lines between planting areas and turf or groundcovers. Its function is simple, but important. Properly installed, edging will prevent soil erosion and help keep mulches contained.

Nowadays, there are so many easy-to-use and effective edging products on the market that even the most inexperienced gardeners can install their own edging. Another great thing about today's edging is that it comes in a wide variety of styles.

Choose an edging that suits your taste and shows off your garden in style. Perhaps you love the clean, crisp look of white fencing. That traditional look is available in edging with Easy Gardener's new Cape Cod Classic Edging.

Each piece of the Cape Cod Edging is 12 inches long and can be easily curved around trees and beds to create a long, fence-like look. Every "fence" piece features stylish curved lines that connect easily and won't come apart.

Perhaps the look of black wrought iron is more appealing to you. If so, Easy Gardener's Forged Iron Edging is something you may want to consider. This new UV-treated plastic edging features the realistic look and texture of wrought iron in easy-to-handle sections.

The 24-inch black edging has easy-to-use connectors that allow fitting around corners. In addition, the edging can be stacked together, giving gardeners the option to create taller borders.

If the rustic look is more your style, you'll want to check out Natural Cedar Edging. This product, yet another made by Easy Gardener, has the appearance of real cedar edging but is actually made of strong, durable plastic.

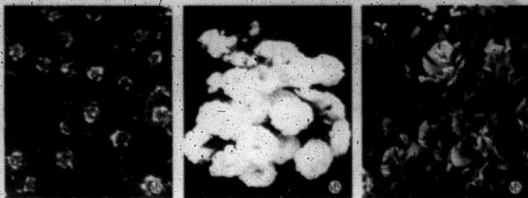
Ideal for creating a nature-looking focal point in the garden, this "cedar" edging is very flexible and finished on both sides.



GIVE ANY YARD A MAKEOVER with decorative and functional edging products like this Cape Cod Classic Edging.

It looks good from any angle. You can make straight edges, slight curves or even sharp right angles by simply connecting each piece of the 20-inch long Natural Cedar Edging. All of the products are easy to install — all you have to do is simply follow package directions. One of the best things about the Cape Cod, Forged Iron and Natural Cedar edgings is that once you install them, they'll last for years. Find the edging at local garden centers, hardware stores, your favorite chain retailer or by calling (800) EASY-INC.

So do check out your borders this season. If they're not up to par, change them. With just a little effort you can give your landscape beds that professionally manicured look for years to come.



MANY VARIETIES OF ROSES are available on their own roots, including the miniature, 'Gizmo,' the shrublet 'Pillow Fight,' and the large-flowered climber, 'Berries n' Cream' shown here from left to right.

Own-Root Roses Best For Cold Climates

(MS) — For decades, rose plants have been commercially grown by budding (grafting) onto a hardy root stock. In addition to being easier to propagate on a large scale, budding also makes roses less susceptible to some soil diseases and nematode damage, especially in climates where frost doesn't kill the roots. For northern gardeners, however, the bud union, or graft point, is very susceptible to winter damage, necessitating extensive winter protection.

Now, Weeks Roses, one of the country's largest commercial rose growers, is propagating many

varieties of roses on their own roots, available in a large, bare-root, field-grown plant. This eliminates the vulnerable bud union and makes rose plants more able to survive the damaging freeze/thaw cycles that are the hallmark of cold climate winters.

While many roses perform better as budded plants, there is a greater number of varieties that do well on their own roots. These varieties have been carefully selected to provide northern gardeners with strong, hardy, healthy plants that are free of flowering and easy to grow.

Weeks' Own-Root Roses, available now at nurseries and garden centers nationwide, encompasses a large and well-rounded selection of America's favorite heirloom roses, as well as many tried and true and brand new varieties of shrub roses, floribundas, and minisatures.

To aid in your selection of top-quality two-root rose plants from Weeks Roses, check out their Web site at www.weeksroses.com, then take your list to your local garden center where you can choose your own Grade #1, field-grown, own-root plants.

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Add Peat For Better Compost This Season

(MS) — Recycling isn't just for newspapers and aluminum cans. Composting is a way to recycle your yard and kitchen waste and is a critical step in reducing the volume of garbage needlessly sent to landfills for disposal.

Nature has always recycled. Composting is what happens when leaves pile up in the fall and begin to decay. Eventually the leaves are returned to the soil where the process continues as living roots reclaim the nutrients from the decomposed leaves. The art of composting has been around for years, but with the help of horticulturalists often referred to as "black gold."

It's easy to learn how to compost, and the benefits go beyond the nutrient-rich humus that is the final product. Composting reduces yard waste, reduces yard work, preserves the environment and helps save money.

However, there are a couple of primary factors to consider. What kind of compost bin will meet your needs? Your garden center can help you decide. Bin placement is another consideration. It should be:

- Close to where it will be used and where it won't interfere with activities or offend neighbors.

- As far from drying winds.

- In partial sunlight to help heat it.

Some communities have composting programs, so it's important to check local authorities for these requirements.

Whether you are a first-time or long-time composter, here is a simple recipe for getting the most out of your compost:

- Add a 1-inch layer of peat moss to every 4 inches of compostable materials.

- Add water when needed (the center of the pile should be moist — not dry or soggy).

- To help cut down on odors, put a 2-inch peat moss cap on top of the pile.

- Using a garden fork, flip over the top layers of organic material every week or two and remember to cap with peat moss each time.

Follow these steps until the center of the compost pile is brown, crumbly and ready to mix into the garden.

Peat moss improves the composting process and is the secret ingredient in this recipe. When peat is used as a foundation for the compost bin, it speeds up decomposition, holds high proportions of water, controls odors, makes a great cap and won't contribute to weed seeds or pathogens. Because it's acidic, peat will trap and save valuable nitrogen sources, which are often emitted from compost leaching into the form of ammonia.

When dug into the garden, this organic dust helps you save money by reducing the amount of water and fertilizer you need and loosens the soil, allowing it to give oxygen to reach the plant's roots. Because both peat and compost are completely natural, using these soil amendments will keep your yard and garden environmentally friendly. So go ahead and start recycling in your yard this spring!

To learn more about composting and other tips for the yard and garden, send a self-addressed, business-sized envelope, stamped with enough postage to reach Canada, to: Canadian sphagnum Peat Moss Association, c/o Oikos Court, Silver, AB, Canada, T8N 0K7. You can also visit their Web site at www.peatmoss.ca.

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