

OUR COUNTRY HOME



A land of enchantment on the road to Shandalee

Lawn care 101

Ask the experts: groundcovers

... and more

Letter from the editor

It's been a long, cool spring; a traditional spring—an almost normal spring. And in that time, amid the anticipation and excitement of summer's approach, the joy and chore of gardening is in full swing for many of us.

If your situation is anything like mine—more “chore” and less “joy”—then why not do something easy, like planting flowers that are so comfortable here that they grow wild—whether because they evolved here, or were imported and loved it. You can read here about the history and lore of some of these wildflowers, find out why many are not actually “wild.”

Can't afford a greenhouse? Then consider the cold frame. I like to call it the “poor man's greenhouse.” It's very effective, and writer/builder Joe Cooke will not only tell you why, he's also shared ideas on creating a 10-foot-long cold frame for under \$100.

If things “always look greener on the other side,” then maybe your neighbors are rolling their lawns. Annemarie Schuetz's article, “Tending the Green Sea,” is filled with tips and tricks on bettering your home turf. I've already followed one of them—“sharing the wealth” to great success.

Perhaps you'd rather forgo “tending the green...” and instead fill your yard with various easy-care groundcovers. Fortunate you! Wallis Brandt has interviewed several area gardeners, all professionals, who have graced



us with their knowledge and recommendations for covering your yard with lawn substitutes—those attractive and sometimes even fragrant low-growing plants that won't need any mowing.

And in the spare time that no mowing brings, follow along as one “master” gardener shares her expertise and love for all things floral—including tips and tools of the trade. From seedlings to saplings, petals to pots, learn how you too, can create a country bouquet in Jonathan Fox's “How does your garden grow?”

Here's wishing everyone a happy and healthy gardening and landscaping season!

— Ramona Jan
Section editor

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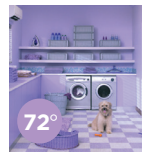
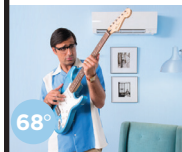


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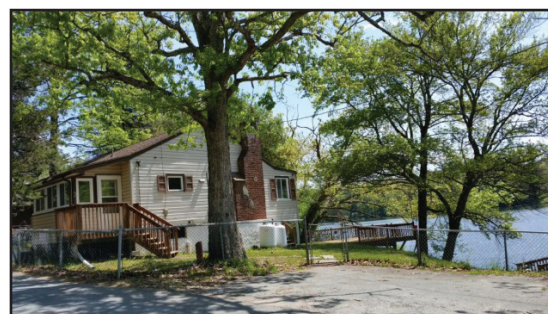
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Building a frugal cold frame



Completed cold frame

By Joe Cooke

So you want vegetables in the winter, fresh from your garden—but you live in a climate with deep freezes and frequent snows. What to do?

Some people put up greenhouses, creating a climate

that lets them grow heat-loving produce year round. It can be an expensive project, with ongoing costs.


There is an alternative: the cold frame. Basically a bottomless box topped by something sturdy and transparent, the cold frame can be built from scrounged parts (therefore free), or from new materials. I built

an approximately 10-by-three-foot cold frame with a friend using new wood and old windows. Total cost under \$100—lumber and incidentals from Callicoon Supply in Callicoon, NY and clear plastic sheeting from Home Depot. A cold frame will still give you salad in winter.

Continued on page 5

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COLD FRAME

Continued from page 4

What you need

Basically you need wood, something transparent, hardware to connect all the parts, and either some carpentry experience or a willingness to fail and fix. When making useful things cheaply, there are too many variables to give a step-by-step recipe. This is an inspiration guide rather than a how-to.

Wood for the frame: two-by-fours are what most people have lying around, but you can use one-by-eights as we did here, or whatever's on hand. Caution: be sure the wood is NOT pressure-treated or painted. Yes, this means you will eventually have to replace it.

Hardware to support corners: screws and brackets are easier; nails and corner blocks are cheaper.

Tools: a saw, a drill and a hammer

The top: old windows are traditionally used, but they aren't the best choice, since water can pool in the cross-pieces. But that can be forestalled by protecting them with clear plastic sheeting. You can also use the plastic sheeting alone in place of the windows, but you'll need to



Windows, retired and looking for work

Photos by Ramona Jan

build some kind of window-like frame to attach it to. Another choice is tempered glass, but this can be expensive and heavy. Ask around for used shower doors. You'll need a hook-and-eye or other way to latch the windows open. You don't want the wind blowing the top down on your head while you garden.

Hinges: at least two per lid panel
Scraps for bottom: gardening expert Eliot Coleman suggests putting scrap wood under the frame. The scrap will rot first and can be replaced.

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COLD FRAME

Continued from page 5

Design it

Many cold frames are built with the top on a slant; however, that requires more sawing. A slanted top makes it easier to lift and it sheds snow (you don't want heavy snow piles to break your top). If you don't want to do much sawing, then go for the flat frame.

Choose the height: a taller frame can accommodate larger vegetables. It also complicates the build.

Calculate dimensions: fit sides lengths to your top. If you're slanting the top, have someone hold it in position so you can measure correctly. A little overhang is needed to shed water.

Put it together

Measure three times, cut once. Keep checking that your corners are square. Again, if you're using windows, top them with clear plastic sheeting to control pooling. Fasten the plastic to the top.



Measure three times, cut once. Note straightedge.



Setting up the frame before screwing it together; strong breeze not required.

Care and feeding

Locate the cold frame facing south, away from shade-making buildings, trees, or hills. Dig up the turf if necessary. Make sure there is either something behind it to which you can anchor the top while you're working, or enough space to lay the tops back and down.

What to put in it: Many experts recommend cold-tolerant produce. Or you can start seeds in it come early spring, perhaps six weeks before the normal planting time. Or harden off seedlings started indoors. Experiment!

Watering: You won't need to water much in winter, but there aren't any hard-and-fast rules. Use your judgment. Yes, it's fine to open the top in the cold, long enough to water or pull plants. Apparently, the exposure to the cold that cold-frame plants receive toughens them up. Just don't open it and wander off, forgetting to close it.

When it gets really cold: Cover the frame with blankets, burlap, or hay. Try putting black-painted, water-filled milk jugs inside to warm up in the sun and emit heat overnight or rigid foam board for insulation.

When it gets warm, say 50° outside or more, keep the top open so your plants don't bake. Besides, you'll want to let the rain in. Some kind of screen cover would be wise so the neighborhood cats don't think it's a giant litter box.

Questions? Try your local garden store, or the library's gardening section. Cold frames are improvised, and their use calls for paying attention to your plants and their needs. Homemade solutions come with no warranties.



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Tending the green sea

Lawn Care 101

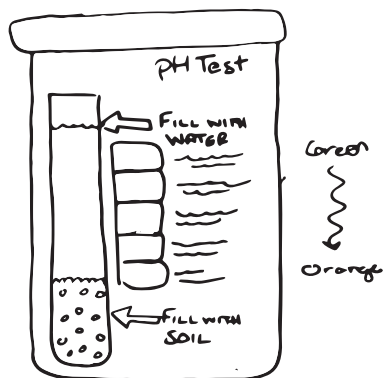
By Annemarie Schuetz

In 1548, a lawn was just “a place voyde of trees.” Now-days, we want our lawns void of weeds, bugs and bald patches, too.

Creating a great lawn doesn't have to be complex, says Dayna Gaeta at Cornell Cooperative Extension in Liberty, NY. She provides an easy-to-follow calendar for lawn enthusiasts, and local garden stores have added their two cents.

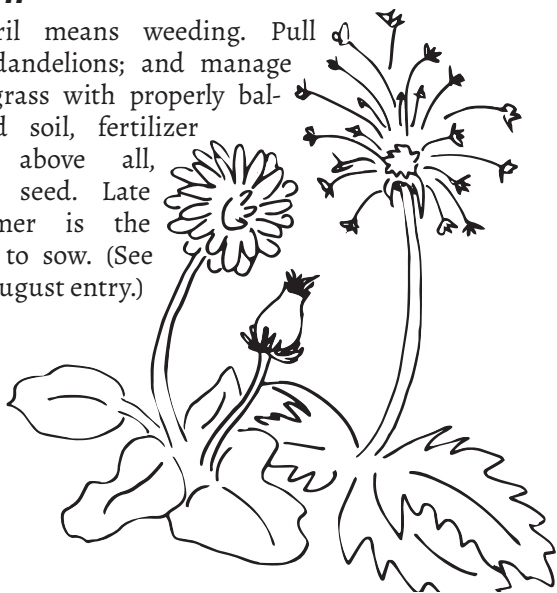
March

The lawn year starts in March, with testing your soil. Find your soil under the snow. (Okay, kidding, wait for the thaw.) Test and aim for a pH of 6.0 to 7. Soil is usually acidic around here, with a lower pH, and the way to fix it is to add lime. “Lime is more important than fertilizer,” says Jim Boxberger, Jr., of Monticello Farm, Home, and Garden. “The lawn can green up just from adding it.”

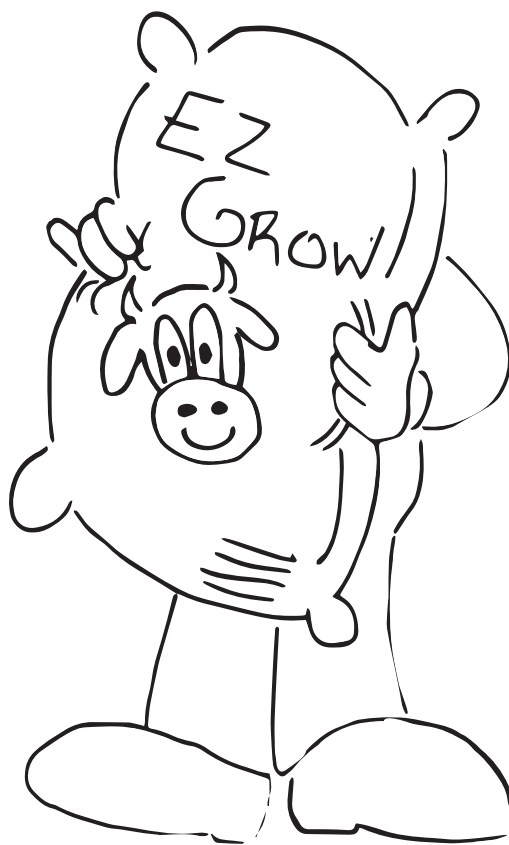


April

April means weeding. Pull the dandelions; and manage crabgrass with properly balanced soil, fertilizer and above all, good seed. Late summer is the time to sow. (See the August entry.)



Illustrations by Amanda Reed

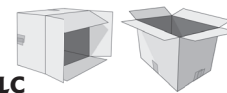


May

Fertilize in late May, assuming lime hasn't done the trick. The assiduous fertilize on Memorial Day, Labor Day and Halloween. The rest of us can pick a holiday or two to feed the grass. Try a slow-release organic fertilizer, which experts say is less likely to seep into the groundwater or burn your lawn. Organic can be more expensive, and you need more of it, but it's good for the beneficial bugs and microbes that inhabit your yard.

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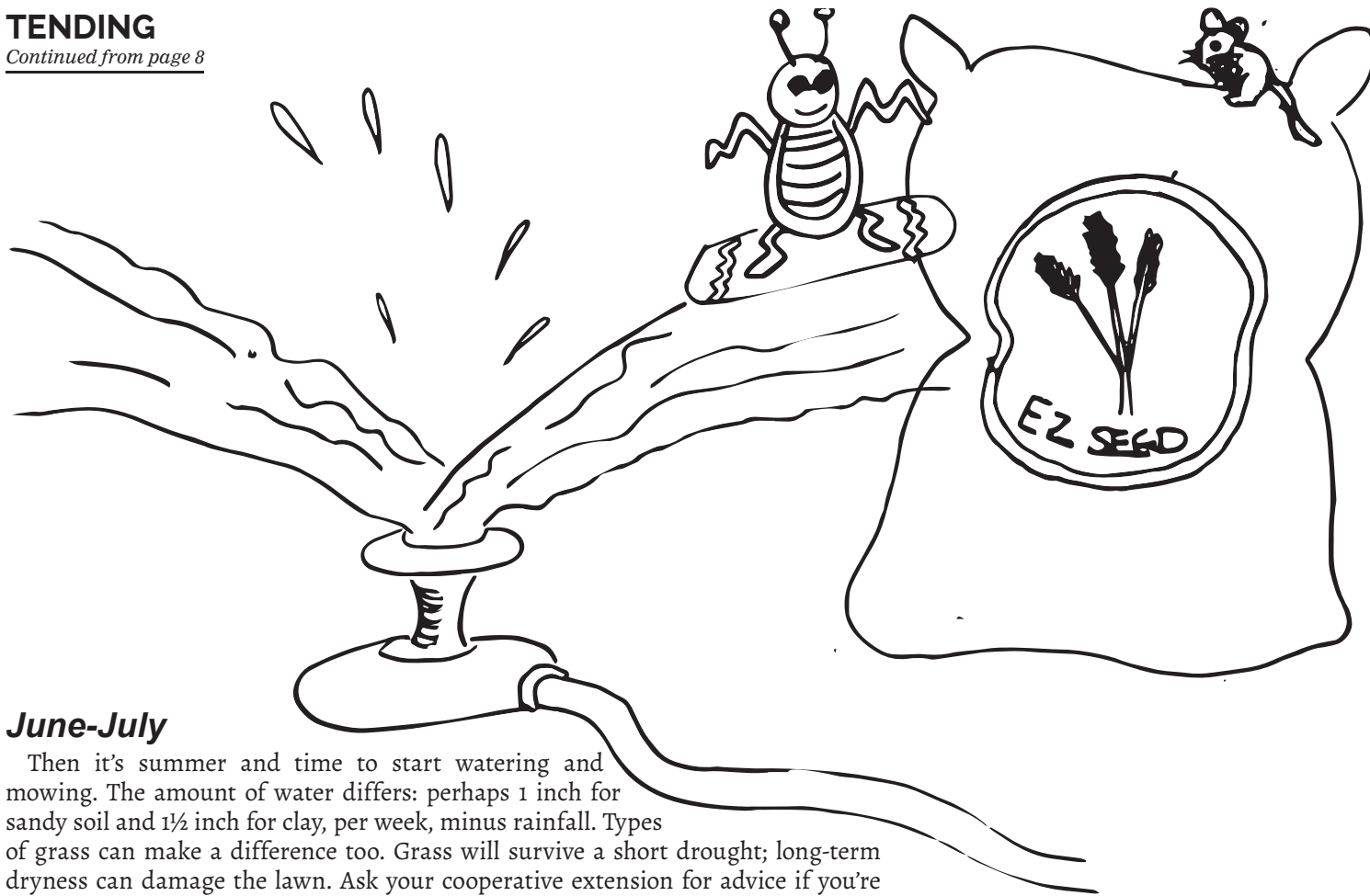
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TENDING

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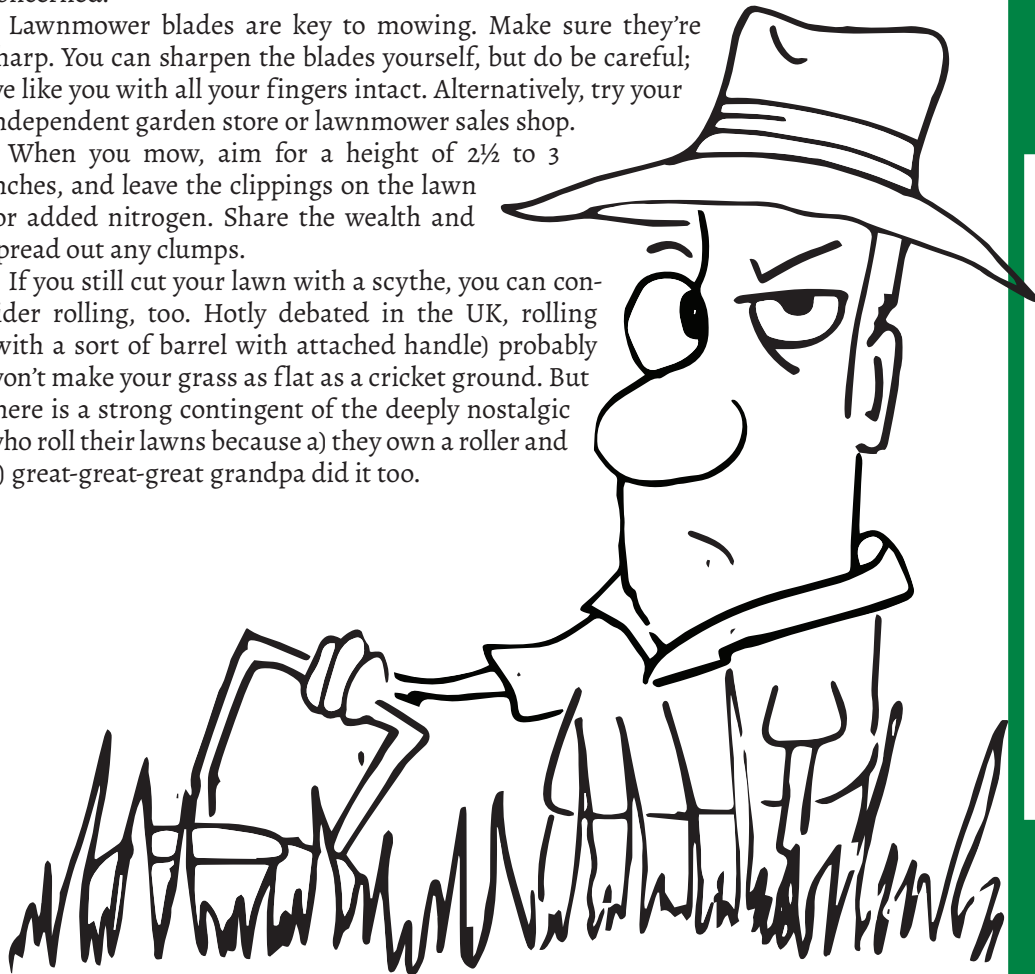
June-July

Then it's summer and time to start watering and mowing. The amount of water differs: perhaps 1 inch for sandy soil and 1½ inch for clay, per week, minus rainfall. Types of grass can make a difference too. Grass will survive a short drought; long-term dryness can damage the lawn. Ask your cooperative extension for advice if you're concerned.

Lawnmower blades are key to mowing. Make sure they're sharp. You can sharpen the blades yourself, but do be careful; we like you with all your fingers intact. Alternatively, try your independent garden store or lawnmower sales shop.

When you mow, aim for a height of 2½ to 3 inches, and leave the clippings on the lawn for added nitrogen. Share the wealth and spread out any clumps.

If you still cut your lawn with a scythe, you can consider rolling, too. Hotly debated in the UK, rolling (with a sort of barrel with attached handle) probably won't make your grass as flat as a cricket ground. But there is a strong contingent of the deeply nostalgic who roll their lawns because a) they own a roller and b) great-great-grandpa did it too.



August

Come mid-August, it's time to seed, or "overseed" if you already have a lawn. The soil is warm and moist and with luck there aren't too many weeds.

With seed, proper pH comes first, says Rich Wulff at Delaware Valley Farm and Garden in Callicoon. "People neglect it and neglect it severely." Then choose seed, but first decide, "for what kind of lawn? High traffic, sunny areas, heavy shade? Each type of seed is different, depending on what they're designed to do." Look for a high germination rate, he adds.

And buy from your local independent garden store, says Boxberger. Box stores can provide seed that isn't specific to our area, and those inexpensive bags may contain a lot of filler.

August is also time to core aerate your lawn. Lawns get compacted from being walked or driven on; they have mats of roots and dead grass, and all of it is a barrier to air and water. Core aerators punch holes in your yard and pull up cores, piercing that barrier. Check your garden store or rental shop.

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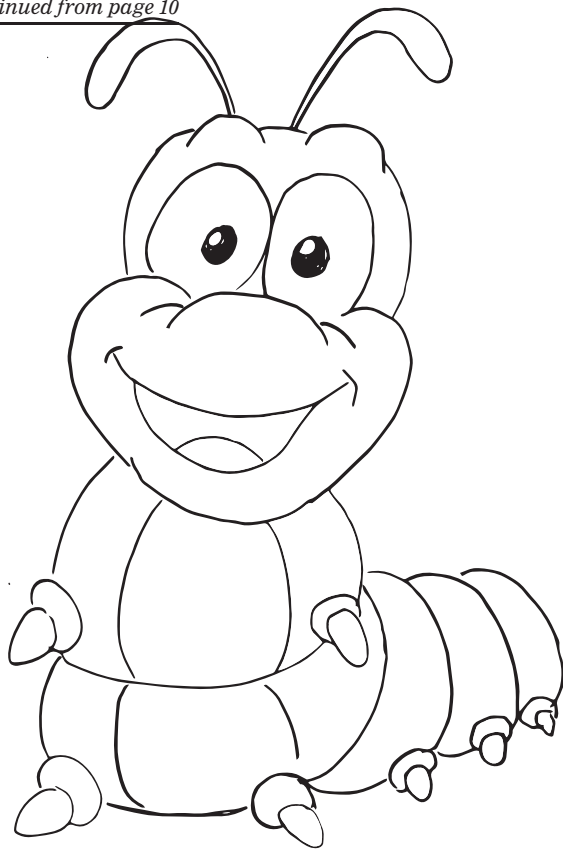
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TENDING

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September

September is grub season; that's when the eggs hatch. Dig up a bit of lawn and count the white wormy things. More than a few? "There are insecticides that will kill them," says Boxberger. "For organic, try milky spore. It's a bacteria that eats grubs and only grubs." Consistent results depend on the lawn and application, and it can take a while to find grubless success.



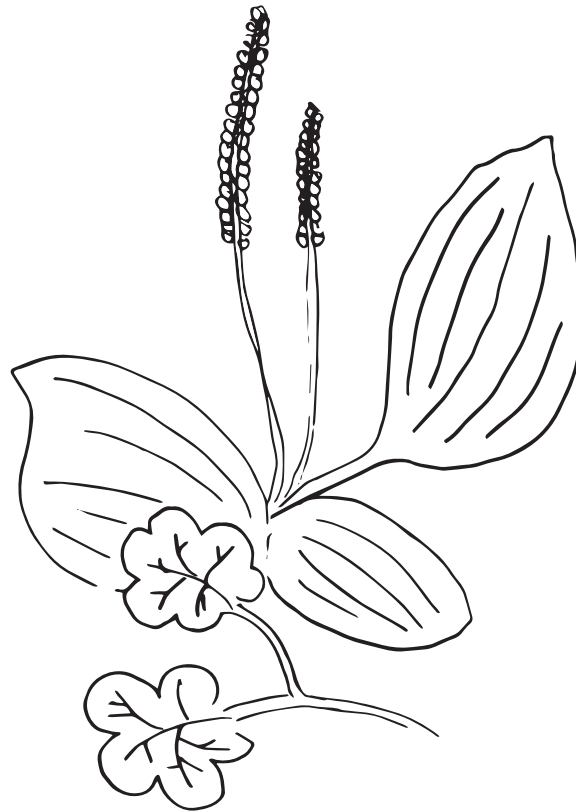
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October

October means more weeding. Even plants weeded earlier may have dropped seeds that have sprouted anew; keep your eye open for plantain weed and the like. And no, there isn't really an easy way to do this. Pull those weeds.

November

November to spring thaw: Relax.

The preceding advice should help; follow it, and you'll have a sea of grass for picnics, lawn tennis, teatime, or exciting the envy of all. If you tried and failed, consider this advice on the perfect lawn from a long-forgotten source: use good seeds, good water and roll daily for 300 years.

Useful contacts:

In Sullivan County, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 845/292-6180

In Wayne County, Penn State Cooperative Extension, 570/253-5970, ext. 4110

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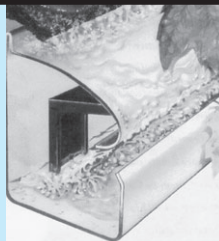
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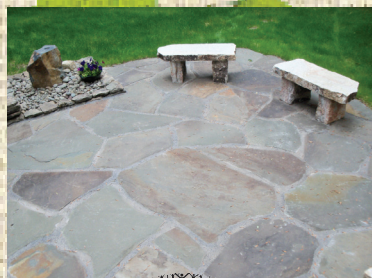
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How does your garden grow?

By Jonathan Charles Fox

For enthusiasts like Livingston Manor's Mia Koerner, tending to the garden is a lot of work, but absolutely a labor of love. "I grew up here in the Manor," Koerner says, "where beauty was evident daily when I walked to school, swam in the lakes and fished with my dad. The natural world was not separate from our daily lives—it was everywhere. My father always had a vegetable garden which he shared with neighbors and later would use in my mother's restaurant (The Oak Table) from the late '70s until 1997. My interest in learning about the natural ecology really began in my teens, when Earth Day was established."

By the time Mia and her husband Joe bought a home on Shandalee Road, they were concerned about pesticides and chemicals that had become commonplace in the agricultural industry and how that could affect their growing family. "We knew it was throwing nature out of balance," she said, "and made a concerted effort to not use any herbicides, insecticides or chemical fertilizers on our property, while doing plenty of research in the local library in order to learn as much as we could." With over 13 acres, Mia and Joe have plenty of room to tend to their own little piece of paradise, but making sure that it will last for generations has also become their mission.

"Back in the 1980s, our precious Shandalee Brook was threatened, and we became activists. It became our mission to make sure the brook, which is a trout-spawning waterway and runs alongside our property, be preserved, recognizing that water was not only essential to our lives, but to the plants and animals too." To become better educated, the couple enrolled in a Cornell Cooperative Extensions program for Master Gardener volunteers, which both completed successfully. Over the years, Mia's expertise has grown. As she toured me through the property, I was dumbfounded by the sheer number and variety of trees and flowers that she could name, sharing tidbits of information regarding medicinal use and historical significance, while enthusing about encouraging the propagation of indigenous plants.

"This lilac is from my mother's yard," Mia said during our nature walk. "It's easy to root them and start a whole new tree. And because they belong here, it has thrived." As we meandered through the property, Mia continued to point out the dozens of species growing naturally along the paths. "The moss informs us that this is acidic soil," she said, "so we basically let the plants tell us what makes them happy." Mayflowers, lilies of the valley, bleeding hearts, primrose and columbine abound. "We've chosen not to mow," Mia said with a sweep of her arm, indicating the large meadow in front of the farmhouse. By doing so, Mia and Joe can enjoy the butterflies, meadowlarks and lightning bugs that thrive where the fields are not tended. "Of course, I have to take care of some things, like the veg-



Mia Koerner examines a blooming magnolia tree in front of her property on Shandalee Road in Livingston Manor, NY.

etables." Pointing out the herb garden, Mia shared more helpful hints. "Chives around your garden keep the deer away," she said, "and lemon balm—they hate it!"

As for the many varieties of wild berries on the property, Mia and Joe like to share. "We let the birds eat what they can," she said of the strawberries and currents. "There is plenty to go around." Mustards, stinging nettles and horsetails share space with the mushrooms thriving along the side of the house. "They only come up when they want to flower and reproduce," Mia said. "Although we can eat much of what we see, it's what is below ground that really counts." As for the tiny star flowers sweeping low across the ground? "They like a rich soil, but can only thrive when the sun can reach them. By the time the leaves are full in the canopy above, their time is over."

There are one or two spaces that are slightly manicured,

by the front porch and near the pool, which has an incredible view of the mountains overlooking Shandalee. Flowering trees provide an array of color and shade, and there is always something in bloom through the seasons. Before the berries arrive, a fiery red quince set in the "English garden" is stunning, next to the honeysuckle, azalea and towering magnolia, which as it turns out can be found naturally this far north. Not far away are potted swiss chard, sweet potatoes, peas and beets. "We source our tomatoes from Anne Hart's place [Domesticities and the Cutting Garden] in Youngsville," Mia said. "They're the best around!"

All in all, there are four structures on the property: a quilt shop, guest quarters, the main house and a picturesque old barn, all surrounded by plants, flowers and

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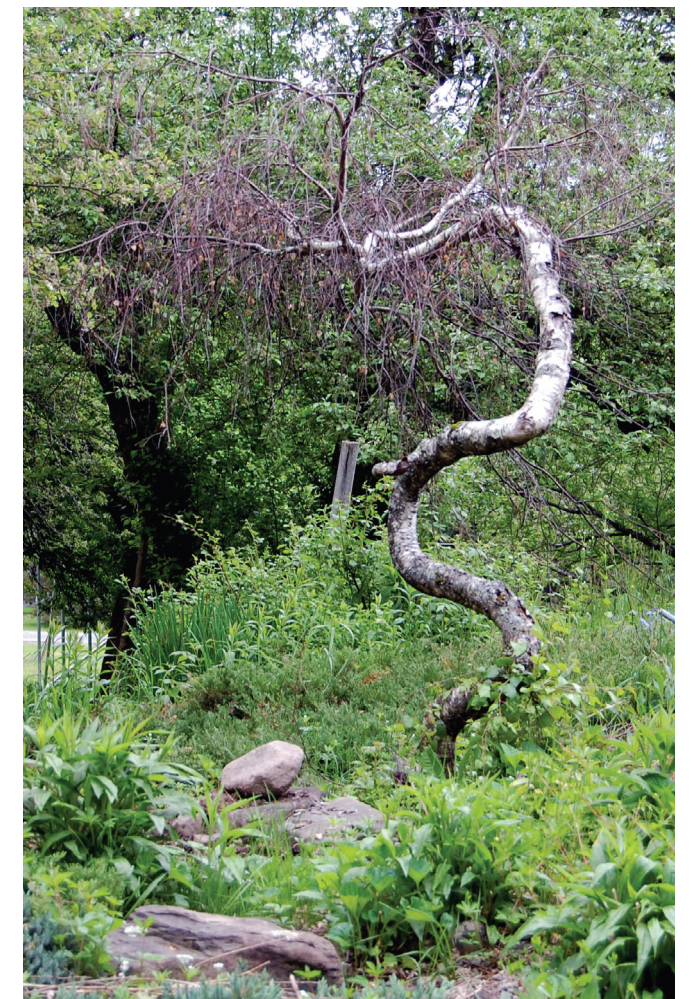
This staircase adorns a structure being turned into a guest house on the Koerner property. Hand painted by Diane Atkins, it is a tribute to Shandalee Brook, which runs along the property.



Lily of the valley and bleeding hearts make a charming setting for this unusual birdbath.



Flowering quince



The twisted trunk of this tree gives a kind of Japanese flavor to this late spring scene.

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TRR photos by Jonathan Charles Fox

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HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Continued from page 15



An air of enchantment is created by the mixture of untrammelled foliage, delicate flowers and a curious mixture of man-made items from different eras and places, like the Buddha head perched atop a vintage milk can in the photo at right or the bird cage, miscellaneous pots—and yes, that looks like a table lamp—in the photo above.

trees. “We’re converting the guest house into a ‘mother-in-law’ space,” Mia said, inviting a closer inspection. “Check out the staircase!” Hand painted by Diane Atkins, a waterfall cascades down the stairs, with foam spraying across the rocks, which hide little creatures peering out through the mist, in a masterful tribute to Shandalee Brook, bringing the great outdoors inside for overnight guests to enjoy.



When asked if she talks to her plants, Mia slyly smiled. “Not on a regular basis,” she answered, “but I love my garden with all of my heart.” In addition to their garden at home, Joe and Mia have helped to develop gardens to beautify the Livingston Manor community, and with the help of Sullivan Renaissance grant funding, the fruits of their labor can be seen in Rotary Park, at the Methodist church and at Temple Agudas Achim.

“We are both able to teach others our methods and philosophies while enjoying the companionship of those new to gardening,” Mia enthused. “We belong to the Roscoe Rockland Garden Club and find this hobby to be rewarding and healthy. Life began in a garden, so perhaps we can better appreciate all that it has to offer our bodies and souls.” To find out more about how you can learn gardening skills from basic to master class, Mia recommends checking with your local library for informative programs and classes available close to home. How does your garden grow?



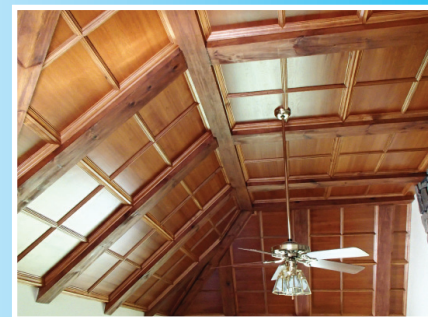
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Ask the experts

Gardener's choice: groundcovers

By Wallis Brandt

Consult any reference book—or website for that matter—and you'll find that the definition of "groundcover" covers a lot of ground. For example, according to Merriam-Webster, groundcover is "the small plants on a forest floor except young trees" and "the planting of low plants (ivy) that covers the ground in place of turf." Dictionary.com says that groundcover includes "herbaceous plants and low shrubs in a forest considered as a whole," as well as "any variety of low-growing or trailing plants used to cover the ground in areas where grass is difficult to grow as in dense shade or on steep slopes." Wikipedia (God bless them) states that groundcover "is any plant that grows over an area of ground... providing protection of the topsoil from erosion and drought." I consulted four garden experts in our area about groundcovers in general and asked each one to elaborate on their favorites as well as their not-so-favorites.

Adrienne Picciano

Adrienne Picciano, aka the Dirt Diva (gardensforeatin.com) has always loved playing in the dirt, plants in general, and the physical exercise she gets from

Continued on page 18



Contributed photos

Lamium, a good plant for shade, was singled out as a good ground cover by two of our experts.

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GROUNDCOVERS

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gardening. Tending gardens in Western Sullivan and the PA side of the Delaware River in Wayne County, Picciano specializes in organic vegetable gardens and edible landscaping.

Picciano defines a groundcover as “a low growing (under a foot tall), low-maintenance perennial that spreads easily to cover bare soil.”

Picciano's Favorites:

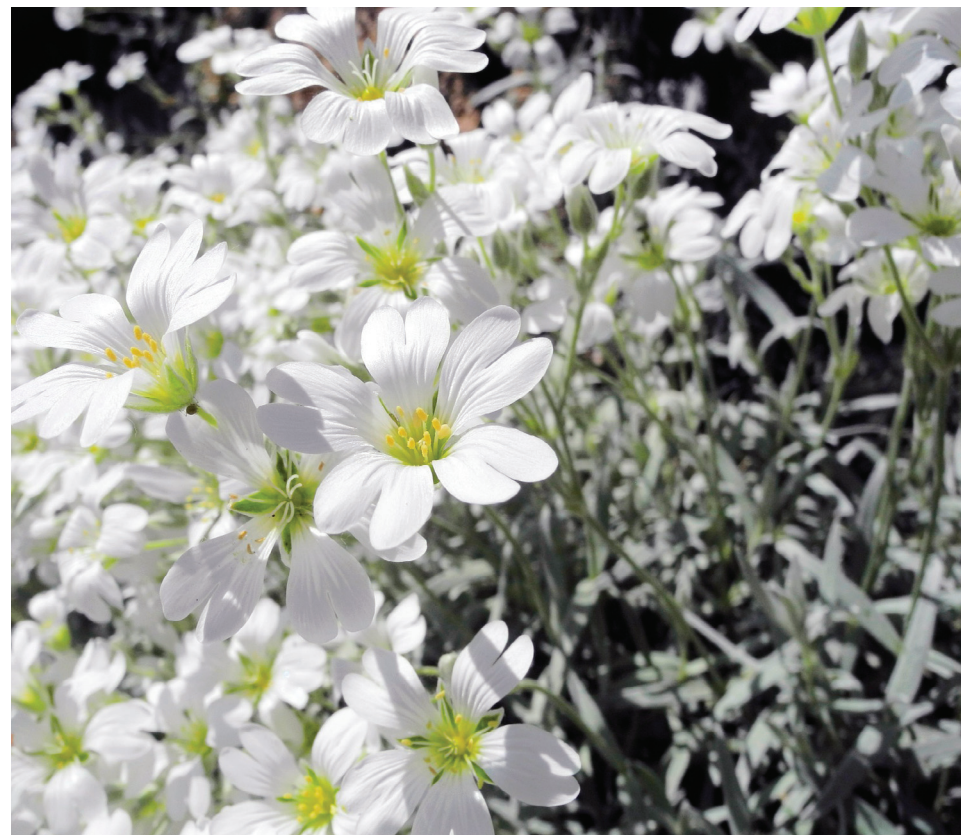
For shade or part sun and shallow soil, Picciano prefers the perennial and versatile *Geranium macrorhizum*. “Some varieties turn red in the fall and smell like green apple Jolly Ranchers when you brush up against them,” says Picciano, adding, “It’s great for landscaping around the bases of trees. They flower in pink, magenta or white, and are super easy to divide.” For dry sites and rock gardens, Picciano likes Lime

Zinger sedum, aka stonecrop, for its “neat red-rimmed, bluish-green, ear-shaped fleshy leaves so soft to the touch.” *Cerastium tomentosum*, aka snow-in-summer, forms a carpet of teardrop-shaped silvery green fuzzy leaves covered in white star shaped flowers, “all of which cascade nicely over rock walls and borders.” And *Microbiota decussata*, aka Siberian carpet cypress, an evergreen woody shrub with “soft feathery fern-like leaves,” will add a hint of Japanese Zen to any garden.

Picciano's Must-Avoid:

Vinca (aka periwinkle or creeping myrtle) and ivy. “Neither is native and both choke out neighboring plants and, once established, can be difficult to remove,” warns Picciano.

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By Matt Lavin from Bozeman, Montana, USA (*Coronilla varia* Uploaded by Tim1357) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons]

Snow in summer is an evergreen with velvety, soft green leaves that is covered with white blossoms in late spring to early summer.

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GROUNDCOVERS

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Magaly Perez

Following a friend's recommendation, Magaly Perez started working for a garden designer in New York City in 1999, and then in 2004 began working upstate for a landscape architect. Upon the landscaper's retirement, Perez, along with a fellow gardener, inherited the care of those gardens. Today, she maintains already existing perennial gardens in Sullivan and Wayne County.

According to Perez, "A groundcover is any plant that covers a large area and is used as an alternative to lawn, creating a mulch to keep ground from drying. It also suppresses weeds and controls erosion.

Perez's Favorites:

Tiarella, May apples, violets and wild ginger—"the latter three are best in their wild habitats," says Perez, who also likes sedums for their wonderful texture, thyme for its aroma, ajuga for its bronzy color and density, and golden creeping jenny for its chartreuse color. For shade, Perez suggests sweet woodruff.

Perez's Must-Avoid:

Bishop's weed, aka Snow on the Mountain, because "it's too aggressive and hard to eradicate, and crown vetch because it's tolerant to many conditions and very invasive."

Suzanne Bold

Suzanne Bold, owner of Bold's Garden Center & Florist on Willow Avenue in Honesdale, PA (www.boldsflorist.com), was first introduced to professional gardening when her mother purchased a roadside fruit/vegetable market in 1971. That stand soon turned into a garden center and small nursery and eventually a full service florist and gift shop serving all of Northeast PA, as well as neighboring towns in both New York and New Jersey.

Bold describes groundcovers as "low-growing, spreading plants that help control weed growth and soil erosion."

Bold's Favorites:

For shade: pachysandra and wild ginger. For partial shade: *Tiarella*, aka foam flower; for part to full sun: creeping phlox. For sun to full shade: Irish moss, ajuga, and *Houttuynia cordata*, aka camelon plan. "Thyme (creeping and woolly) and catnip are sun worshippers," says Bold. "Vinca minor likes full sun to partial shade, while sweet woodruff and *Lamium*, aka dead nettle, prefer full shade. All are deer resistant—just make sure



Crown vetch, though it blooms beautifully over a long period and is good at stabilizing slopes, received a thumbs down from a couple of our experts for being too invasive.

they're planted in their specific habitat locations."

Bold's Must-Avoid:

"Japanese knotweed, purple loosestrife, tansy and crown vetch are all extremely invasive," advises Bold. "If too much is ingested, crown vetch can also be harmful to horses."

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GROUNDCOVERS

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Ajuga carries spires of flowers in blue shades in late spring-early summer.

Patti Zins

Before locating to upstate New York, Patti Zins of Zin Gardens (845/482-3465) worked many years in commercial greenhouses and nurseries in New Jersey and Idaho. She did interior plant maintenance of residential and commercial installations as well as some residential outdoor work. In Sullivan County, Zins specializes in maintaining and enhancing existing ornamental gardens involving mostly perennials, shrubs and small trees.

According to Zins, a groundcover is “a group of low growing plants that spread and overlap enough to crowd out weeds.”

Zins' Favorites:

“English ivy, pachysandra and creeping juniper are good lawn substitutes,” says Zins, “and cotoneaster is great on slopes.” Zins also plants vinca in shade, *Lamium* in part shade and wintercreeper in sunnier spots.

Zins' Must-Avoid

According to Zins, bishops weed, “has white roots that snake around everything making it practically impossible to eradicate. Though it may look good on a hillside far away from areas where it might invade, whatever you do, keep it away from your garden bed.”

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Choose 4 Toss-Ins:

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Chicken(+\$2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Crispy Chicken(+\$2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunflower Seeds | <input type="checkbox"/> Almonds(+\$2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crushed Walnuts(+\$2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Crumbled Bacon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shredded Carrot | <input type="checkbox"/> Dried Cranberry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diced Ham | <input type="checkbox"/> Gorgonzola |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feta | <input type="checkbox"/> Grated Parmesan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shredded Cheddar | <input type="checkbox"/> Diced Red Onion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sliced Mushroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Corn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bell Peppers | <input type="checkbox"/> Black Olives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celery | <input type="checkbox"/> Croutons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chick Peas | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Boiled Eggs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocado(+\$2) | <input type="checkbox"/> diced Tomato |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jalapenos | <input type="checkbox"/> Marinated Red Peppers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tortilla Strips | <input type="checkbox"/> Black Beans |

Choose A Dressing:

(Mixed In On the Side)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thousand Island | <input type="checkbox"/> Chunky Blue Cheese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creamy Ranch | <input type="checkbox"/> Dijon Honey Mustard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balsamic Vinaigrette | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oil & Vinegar | <input type="checkbox"/> Creamy Caesar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lite Raspberry Walnut Vinaigrette | <input type="checkbox"/> Parmesan Peppercorn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fat Free Zesty Italian | <input type="checkbox"/> Chipotle Ranch |
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TRR photo by Ramona Jan
Foxglove

By Ramona Jan

Brought by transatlantic travelers, many of our Northeastern wildflowers originated in Europe and Asia and are now considered native. Various blooms spread over decades into our surrounding area and

soon became naturalized—making it hard to distinguish truly indigenous plants from the Euro/Asian-cultivars. Nonetheless, if you are new to flower gardening or just want something easy to maintain, consider

planting any of the following “native” (or anyway, naturalized) wildflowers:

Continued on page 24

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BLOOMS

Continued from page 22

Foxglove

Tall and sensational, one of the most beautiful flowers that you'll find growing naturally is foxglove (*Digitalis*). Originating from the wooded hillsides of England where foxes made their dens, the name derives from the Old English "foxes glofa." It's important to get to know foxglove by its leaves because it's biennial, which means, it blooms every other year. When not in bloom its cluster of leaves is low to the ground, broad and slightly fuzzy, and it has no stalk. In the right conditions, foxglove will proliferate like crazy, as it re-seeds itself. And the deer won't touch them!

Buttercups and forget-me-nots

As a kid, you may remember holding a buttercup (*Ranunculus*) under a friend's chin and if it reflected yellow, it meant they liked butter. It was a good bet since most kids are fond of butter. Species of the *Ranunculus* genus are widespread around the world; the native variety in our area is called *Ranunculus bulbosa*.

You (or more likely your mother or grandmother) also may also remember a trend that began as far back as medieval times when ladies wore forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*) as a symbol of faithfulness and enduring love. According to Greek lore, after God named all the plants, a tiny unnamed one cried out, "Forget-me-not!" and God replied, "That shall be your name." Unlike the common buttercup found here, the local *Myosotis* are garden escapees.

Both buttercups and forget-me-nots are perennials that bloom in spring and have complementary colors, so they look great together. Buttercups can grow in a wide variety of conditions, but forget-me-nots must have moisture, so to see them together, place them near ponds or on the banks of running water. Begin with one plant or scatter seeds, and each spring you'll enjoy a blanket of blue and yellow.

Daylilies

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis*) originated in Asia, but came to our shores along with early white settlers in Colonial times, and since has naturalized abundantly—you'll see it everywhere on roadsides in our area (if the deer have left it alone). Until hybridization, daylilies only came in three colors: yellow, orange and tawny red, and those

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Buttercups and forget-me-nots

Contributed photos by Patti Zins

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BLOOMS

Continued from page 25



Daylilies

are the colors you'll see in the natural landscape. Considered the perfect perennial, daylilies now come in hundreds of varieties and are adaptable to many different land-

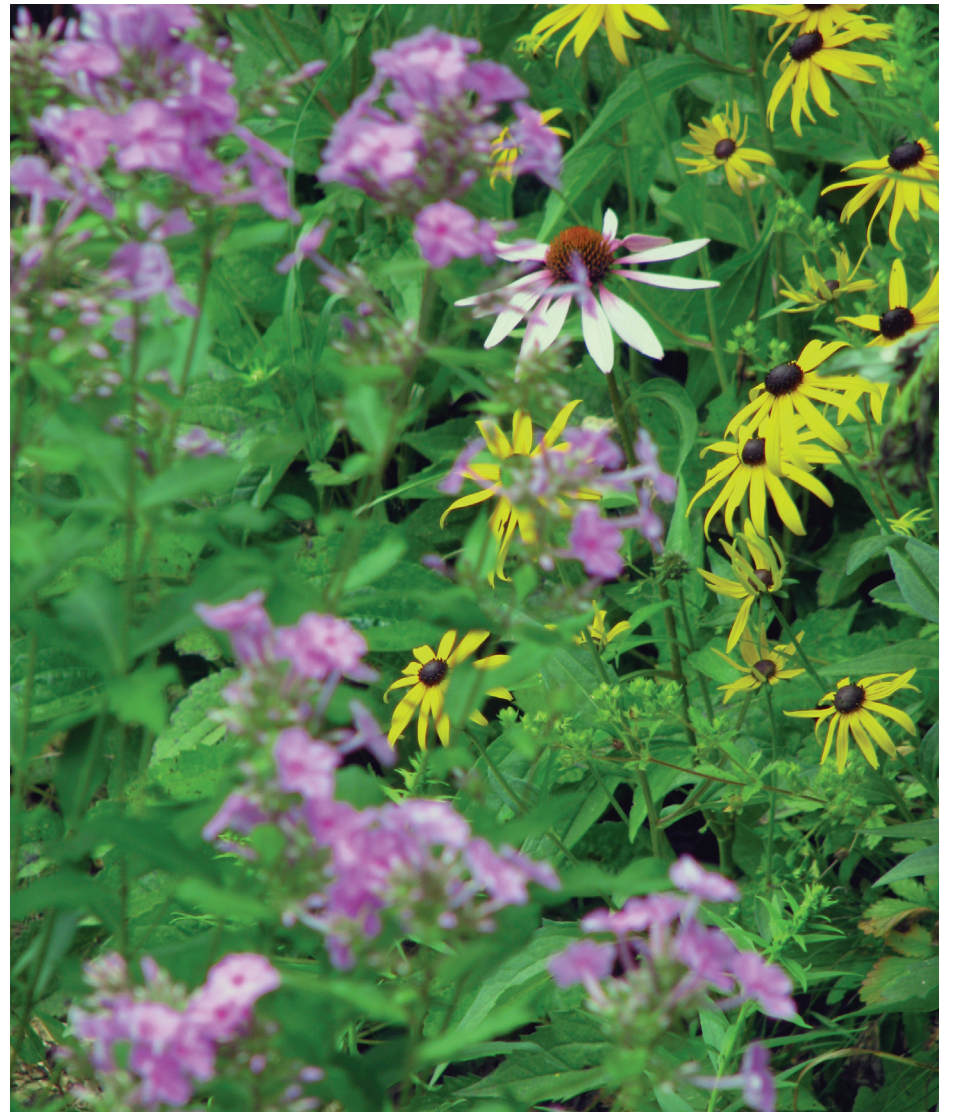
scapes; however, the flower only lasts 24 hours. But they have many stalks with groups of buds that will continue to flower for weeks from late spring into autumn.

Black-eyed Susans, phlox and purple coneflower

Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) are such short-lived perennials that though they may appear to come up again year after year, they may simply be re-seeding themselves. They are native to North America, but their name derives from a very old British poem titled "Black-Eyed Susan," and, of course, refers to the dark cone in the center of its overlapping, tony cadmium yellow petals. Warning: to deer, they are candy. Luckily, there are several non-toxic deer repellents, all of which can be found at some local hardware stores, Agway and/or Home Depot.

For the Native Americans, the full moon in April heralded the appearance of a ground-cover called moss pink phlox (*Phlox subulata*),

which signified the beginning of spring. Today, phlox, on ground level or in tall columns, are some of the most spectacular and easiest perennials to grow in Northeastern gardens. Fragrant and multi-colored in pale blue, violet, pink, bright red and white, phlox is also an all-around favorite food for hummingbirds. Pair phlox with purple cone flower, aka *Echinacea*, with its soft mauve-colored petals and bright sienna center, and you'll also attract a wide variety of bees and butterflies. Different parts of the *Echinacea* plant is used in teas and alternative medicine to boost the immune system especially in regards to the common cold.

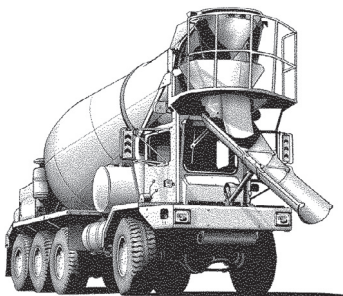


Black-eyed Susans, phlox and *Echinacea*

Planting tip

During a light rain, simply toss wildflower seeds on top of a turned bed of soil. The moisture will cause the seeds to lodge into the soil, and just like weeds, wild flowers will readily grow.

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