

how to **START A GARDEN**



melindamyers.com

Starting a new garden or renovating one you inherited can be overwhelming. Breaking down the planning and implementation into smaller steps can help reduce the anxiety and get you started. We will look at evaluating the site, preparing the soil, and selecting plants to create the garden you desire.

PLANNING THE GARDEN

- Determine your goals
 - FLOWER GARDENS
 - ◆ Attract and support pollinators and songbirds
 - ◆ Edible flowers
 - ◆ Flowers to cut for bouquets
 - ◆ Provide seasonal interest

YOUR DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE PREFERENCES

- Manageable size and number of beds
- Start small and increase with experience
- Consider time throughout the growing season
 - Planting
 - Weeding & Watering
 - Other Maintenance
 - Clean up
- Flowerbed size
 - At least 3' deep for impact - when possible
 - All parts accessible from edges
 - Internal steppers and paths for access within large beds
- Easy to manage area around the garden
- Edge garden beds
 - Slows infiltration of weeds and grass
 - Contains mulch
 - Easier mowing

LOCATE THE GARDEN

- Provide needed growing conditions for plants selected

◦ SUNLIGHT

- ◆ Monitor sunlight throughout the year and throughout the day
 - * Full sun
 - 6, preferably 8 or more, hours of direct sunlight
 - * Part sun
 - 4 to 6 hours of direct sunlight
 - * Part shade
 - 2 to 4 hours of direct sunlight
 - * Shade
 - 2 hours of direct sunlight or bright, indirect light throughout the day
- ◆ Morning sun is less intense and a good option for part shade plants
- ◆ Afternoon sun is more intense and usually hotter, making it a better match for full to part sun plants

◦ SOIL CONDITIONS

- ◆ Clay - drains slowly, holds moisture and nutrients longer than others
- ◆ Sand - fast draining - does not retain water and nutrients as long as others
- ◆ Loam - mix of sand, silt and clay particles, moisture and nutrient holding between the other two
- ◆ Moisture
 - * Rainfall or what you can provide
 - * Conveniently located for irrigation if needed

Ebert's Greenhouse Village

When you visit Ebert's Greenhouse Village for the first time, you'll be charmed by our rustic ambiance and the beautiful surrounding countryside in Ixonia, Wisconsin. You'll meet our friendly and knowledgeable staff who share your passion for gardening and the rewarding, enjoyable life experience it provides!

Our selection of annual flowers and gorgeous hanging basket and container combinations are second to none - they are planted and cared for with your success and lasting enjoyment in mind. Our extensive collection of perennials, trees, shrubs and roses is one of the finest in Wisconsin, and our culinary herbs and vegetables can be planted with confidence! As our grounds continue to evolve, you'll see additions that will enhance your shopping experience with us. In our Gift Shoppe, we continue to build a delightful selection of indoor and outdoor home and landscape accents to inspire you to assemble an environment you will love spending time in all season long!

At Ebert's Greenhouse Village, "We Grow HAPPINESS!!"

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OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Convenient for planting and tending
- Consider the views
 - When outside
 - When inside looking out
- Look for under utilized and non-traditional spaces

BUILD A HEALTHY FOUNDATION TO REDUCE ONGOING MAINTENANCE

- Create healthy soil
- Most gardeners start with less-than-ideal soil
- Majority of plants thrive in moist, well-drained soil
- Amend existing soil by incorporating several inches of compost or other organic matter into the top 8 to 12" of soil
- Test soil
 - Improve Your Garden with Soil Testing
 - Testing available through most extension offices
 - ◆ University Website Directory
 - Results tell you what, if any, fertilizer and amendments are needed
 - No test
 - ◆ Incorporate low nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer, Milorganite when amending the soil or at planting and midseason if needed
 - * How to Fertilize Your Garden with Milorganite

CREATING A NEW GARDEN

- Converting Grass to Gardens
 - Identify the area
 - Call 811 before you start digging
 - Use hose, ropes or other item to mark the bed

- Edge the bed and remove sod
 - ◆ Repurpose sod
 - * Add to compost pile - green side down
 - * Place near your home's foundation to fix grade issues
 - * Create new raised garden beds
 - Mark new garden location
 - Place layers of sod - green side down - within the border
 - Fertilize between layers
 - Cover with plastic to kill grass and weeds
 - Plant
- Chemical-free ways to kill the existing lawn
 - Edge bed
 - Cut grass short
 - Cover with cardboard or several layers of newspapers
 - Add mulch
 - ◆ Cut through and plant
 - ◆ Or, wait for material to decompose, then plant a season or year later
- Solarize
 - Edge garden
 - Cover with clear plastic
 - ◆ 2 to 3+ weeks kills most
 - ◆ May need to Lightly cultivate to remove weed seedlings
 - ◆ 6 to 8 weeks during the hottest part of season (best)
- Occultation
 - Edge garden
 - Cover with opaque material
 - 4 to 6 weeks



About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including *Can't Miss Small Space Gardening*, the *Midwest Gardener's Handbook 2nd Edition* released 2022, and *Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy*. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and *Instant Video*, including the latest *Food Gardening for Everyone* DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

Visit Melinda's website,
melindamyers.com

- **No Dig Gardening**

- Lasagna garden

- ◆ **Build Great Garden Soil with Lasagna Gardening**

- ◆ Build raised bed from garden trimmings and compost

- ◆ Create bed when materials available, then plant

- * Or, stockpile materials, create bed and plant right away

- Hugelkultur garden

- ◆ **Hugelkultur, Hill or Mound Gardening**

- ◆ Use branches and twigs as basis for decades of benefits

- ◆ Lasagna garden on top of this layer

ALTERNATIVES TO IN GROUND PLANTINGS

- **Raised Bed Gardening**

- Elevate garden for easy access

- **What to fill it with?**

- ◆ Blended topsoil

- ◆ Planting mix

- ◆ Make your own with lasagna or Hugelkultur gardening

- Better drainage - dry out more quickly

- **Creating a raised bed**

- Height

- ◆ Minimum 10" or higher for the plants and to make maintenance easier

- Width

- ◆ 4" or width that fits the space and is easy to reach all parts of the garden

- Length

- ◆ Available space

- ◆ Size of lumber used...

- Mark the area where raised beds will be placed

- ◆ Add 6" or more around the edge to create mowing strip

- Edge the area to slow invasion of weeds and grass

- Cut existing grass and weeds short

- Build raised bed

- Cover the bottom with newspapers or layer of cardboard

- Consider lining with hardware cloth to discourage ground squirrels and chipmunks

- Weed barrier to help keep unwanted tree roots, like black walnuts out

- Fill with planting mix

CONTAINERS

- Convenient for growing, tending, enjoying and using

- Containers with drainage holes or self-watering pots

- Larger the container, more growing media

- ◆ Holds water and nutrients longer

- Type of material container is made from influences moisture holding ability

- ◆ Terra cotta pots dry out more quickly than plastic or glazed

- ◆ A style & material that complements your garden design & style

- * **Elevated gardens** are just a container with legs

- **Edible Ornamental Container Gardens**

- **Expand Your Garden Space and Planting Options with Container Gardens**

- Fill with a quality potting mix

- **Planting tips**

- In general

- ◆ 3 to 4 plants in a 10 to 12" pot

- ◆ 4 to 6 plants in a 14 to 16" container

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Available On Demand!

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seasonal prize!**

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- ◆ 6 to 8 plants in a 16 to 20" planter
- Fertilize containers
 - Low nitrogen, slow-release at planting and mid season if needed
 - Fast-release more often according to label directions
- Watering containers
 - Check daily
 - Water thoroughly when top few inches are slightly moist
 - Water Saving Tips for Container Gardens
 - ◆ Plant Nannies
 - ◆ Wool Pellets
 - ◆ Container irrigation systems

FLOWER GARDEN DESIGN TIPS

- Low Maintenance Design Tips
- Fewer species
 - More of each
 - ◆ Reduces maintenance
 - ◆ Greater impact
- Mixed borders
 - Trees, shrubs, flowers and edibles
 - Extend seasonal interest
 - Consider using attractive vegetable and fruit cultivars
 - ◆ Edibles in Your Flower Gardens
- Create the illusion of depth
 - Tall plant next to much shorter plants
 - Fine textured plants in the back
- Color
 - Flower Garden Design Basics
 - Warm colors
 - ◆ Red, orange and yellow

- * Create focal point - grab your attention
- * Warming and energizing
- * Make large areas appear smaller
- Cool colors
 - ◆ Blue, green and violet
 - * Peaceful and cooling
 - * Make smaller areas appear larger
- Complementary colors
 - ◆ Opposite each other on the artist's color wheel
 - * Combine nicely, like blue and yellow
- Analogous colors
 - ◆ Colors next to each other on the artist's color wheel
- Color echoing
 - ◆ Repetition of color
 - * Provides unity and balance
- Texture
 - Bold
 - ◆ Large leaves and flowers
 - * Creates focal point
 - * Need few to create impact
 - Fine
 - ◆ Narrow leaves, small flowers
 - * Need many to create impact
 - * Place in back of garden for illusion or depth
- Multi-season interest
 - Flowers
 - Leaves
 - Fall color
 - Winter interest
- Attract birds and pollinators

- Nectar for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds
- Food for caterpillars (host plant)
- Seeds for birds

SELECTING THE RIGHT PLANT FOR YOUR GARDEN

- Suited to the growing conditions
- Plant hardiness
- Suited to the length of the growing season
 - Average last spring frost to first fall frost
 - ◆ Determine if you can plant seeds directly in the garden
 - * Marigolds
 - * Zinnias
 - ◆ Start with transplants
 - * Geraniums
 - * Impatiens
 - * Petunia

ANNUAL

- From start to end of life cycle in one year
 - Cosmos
 - Marigolds
 - Sunflowers
- Some plants that are annual in cold climates are actually perennials in milder climates
 - Geraniums (Pelargonium)
 - Wax Begonia
 - Lantana
- Tender annual
 - Sensitive to frost
 - ◆ Impatiens
 - ◆ Coleus

- Half-hardy annual
 - Can tolerate cool air and soil, but damaged by frost
 - ◆ Ageratum
 - ◆ Lobelia
 - ◆ Petunia
- Hardy annual
 - Tolerates cold soil, cold air and frost
 - ◆ Alyssum
 - ◆ Pansies

BIENNIAL

- From seed forms basal foliage the first season, overwinters, then second season it grows more leaves, flowers, sets seeds and dies
 - Hollyhocks
 - Foxglove
 - Tall Verbena
- Some growers start biennials early, so they bloom and die the first year in the garden

PERENNIAL

- From seed may just grow leaves the first year, second and subsequent years they grow and flower
 - First year they sleep
 - Second year they creep
 - Third year they leap

SELF CLEANING / FREE FLOWERING

- No deadheading needed
 - Annuals
 - ◆ Calibrachoa
 - ◆ Ageratum
 - ◆ Angelonia
 - Perennials

- ◆ Willow amsonia
- ◆ Bugbane
- ◆ Turtlehead

THE WELL-TENDED PERENNIAL GARDEN by Tracy Disabato-Aust

TERMS TO KNOW

DWARF

- Smaller than the species, but may not be as small as you think it will be

COMPACT

- Shorter and bushier than its parent plant
- Many are perfect for containers, window boxes and hanging baskets

DISEASE RESISTANCE CODES

- V (Verticillium)
- F (Fusarium)
- FF (Fusarium Races 1 & 2)
- FFF (Fusarium Races 1, 2 & 3)
- N (Nematode)
- T (Tobacco Mosaic Virus)
- LB (Late Blight)
- EB (Early Blight)
- St (Stemphylium Gray Leaf Spot)
- A (Alternaria Stem Canker)
- C (Cladosporium Leaf Mold)
- TSWV (Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus)
- Johnny's Seeds has a comprehensive list of these

AAS - ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS

- Plants with this designation have been tested nationally and selected for their suitability for home gardens

- Winners have improved flavor, growth habit, disease resistance or other quality that makes them better than varieties that are already on the market

NATIVE

- Definitions vary and some look to natives from their region, country or continent
- According to wildflower.org, "A plant that occurs naturally in the place where it evolved." (without intervention from people)

NATIVAR

- Cultivar (bred by people) of a native plant
- Usually to provide more contained growth, shorter more compact growth, different flower color...

H - HEIRLOOM

- Most agree an heirloom is a plant variety that has been around for more than 50 years, preserved and kept true to its parentage

HYBRIDS

- These are the result of breeding programs and selected for uniform growth, fruit production, and other desirable characteristics

GMO

- Genetically modified organisms that have been modified in a laboratory
 - Roundup ready corn
- Not necessarily a hybrid or cultivar

NON GMO

- Have not undergone genetic engineering in a lab
- Can include plant crosses and selection resulting in plants that have improved or unique qualities
 - x *Heucherella* is a cross between coral bells (*Heuchera*) and foam flower (*Tiarella*)

DAYS TO HARVEST OR MATURITY

- The average number of days from planting until you pick your first ripe tomato or flower
- You may be harvesting sooner in a hot summer and later during a cooler growing season

READING THE SEED PACKET

- When to start indoors
 - Plants that need more time than length of our season allows
 - For earlier bloom or harvest in the garden
- Tips for seed starting success
- Damping off
- Winter sowing
- When to plant in the garden
 - Based on frost and soil temperatures
- Light conditions
- Days to germinate
 - When seedlings appear
- Days to harvest / flowering / maturity

HOW TO PLANT SEEDS

- Depth
 - Usually twice the diameter of the seed deep
 - Spacing - recommended distance between seeds
- Thinning
 - Original spacing is often closer than final spacing to allow for remaining plants to reach full size
 - Remove excess seedlings leaving enough room for remaining plants to reach full size

CHECK PLANT TAGS FOR HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Plant name
 - Common name
 - ◆ One plant can have many common names
 - * Varies with region
 - * Varies with experience - what you grew up knowing
 - Botanical name
 - ◆ Important for ensuring you end up with the right plant
 - * e.g. Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) - green leaves turn red in fall
 - Commonly called red maple is the maroon leaved Norway Maple
 - ❖ *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King'
 - ❖ *Genus species* 'Cultivar'
 - ❖ *Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* - Thornless Honeylocust
 - ❖ *Genus species variety* or *Genus species var. variety*
- Hardiness
- Light requirements
- Preferred soil conditions
- Mature size
 - That small plant can grow quite large
 - ◆ Plan for its mature size
- Spacing
 - Important for permanent plants that are difficult to move
 - ◆ Trees and shrubs
 - When planting perennials closer together than recommended you will be digging and dividing sooner
 - When planting annual flowers too close together
 - ◆ Increases disease
 - ◆ Reduces flowering
 - ◆ Reduces productivity

PLANTING TIPS

- Transplants
 - Purchase healthy plants
 - ◆ Selecting Healthy Plants
 - Harden off as needed
 - ◆ Hardening Off Transplants
 - ◆ Gradually introduce to the outdoor conditions
 - ◆ Start with one hour of direct sun, increasing every day
 - ◆ Stop fertilizing, allow soil to go a bit drier between waterings
 - ◆ Ready for the garden in 1 to 2 weeks
 - Planting in the garden
 - ◆ Loosen the roots
 - ◆ Dig hole twice as wide as the rootball
 - ◆ Plant the same depth as growing in the container
 - ◆ Proper spacing
 - * Check the plant tag and provide space to reach mature size
 - * Fill voids between perennials with annuals the first year or two
- Annual flowers
 - Remove flowers to encourage roots and more compact, sturdier growth
 - ◆ Just can't do it...
 - * Remove flowers on every other plant or every other row
 - * The following week, do the remaining
 - ◉ Pinch back leggy plants to encourage fuller growth

WATERING

- New plantings often enough to keep soil moist
- Once established, most plants need an inch of water per week - adjust for weather
 - Provide 1" (or what is needed) once a week in heavy soils
 - Provide 1/2" twice a week in fast draining soils
- Mulch the soil with organic matter, such as shredded leaves or evergreen needles
 - Conserve moisture, you'll water less
 - Suppresses weeds - less to pull
 - As mulch breaks down, it improves soil

- Consider soaker hoses or drip irrigation
 - Applies water directly to the soil, where it is needed
 - Easier for you - just water with a turn of the faucet

MULCHING

- Spreading a thin layer of organic matter over the soil surface
 - Shredded leaves
 - Evergreen needles
- Coarser the material, thicker the layer
 - Leaves - 1"
 - Woodchips - 3-4"
- Keep mulches several inches away from tree trunks, stems and plant crown
- Conserves moisture
 - You'll water less
- Suppresses weeds
 - Less to pull
- As mulch breaks down, it improves the soil
- Do not use weed barrier under organic mulches
 - Weed seeds blow in and root through mulch and fabric
 - Composted organic mulch never reaches soil and can block pores, preventing water and air from reaching soil below
 - As plants grow, weed barrier can girdle tree trunk and cause death
- Quick tips for applying mulch
 - Save pots as you plant
 - Once plants are in the garden, cover with pots and spread mulch
 - Or apply mulch to garden first, then push aside to plant
- Stone mulch provides aesthetic value, but does not improve the soil
 - Do use weed barrier under stone
 - ◆ Prevents stone from sinking into soil
 - Remove organic matter (leaves and such) that collects on stone mulch

FERTILIZING

- Follow soil test results
- Incorporate slow-release fertilizer at planting
 - Releases small amounts of nutrients over a long period of time
 - Make second application mid season, if needed
- Fast release fertilizer every week or two according to label directions for annuals and containers
- Stop **fertilizing perennials** August 1st, so they can prepare for winter
 - Spreading a 1 to 2" layer of compost over soil every other year or two is often sufficient for perennials
- Trees and shrubs
 - Wait a year to fertilize new plantings
 - Established trees and shrubs often get enough nutrients from fertilizer applied to the planting beds where they are grown or surrounding lawn
 - **Fertilizing trees**

GROOMING

- **Deadheading**
 - Remove faded flowers to promote more blooms or tidier appearance
 - Spike-type flowers like salvia
 - ◆ Remove faded flower back to side shoots or healthy leaves
 - Daylily, balloon flower
 - ◆ Remove individual flowers as they fade, then remove the flower spike
 - Coral bells and armeria
 - ◆ Cut flower stem back to rosette of leaves
- **Soft pinch**
 - ◆ Remove tip to encourage branching
- **Hard pinch**
 - ◆ Cut leggy stems back to above a set of healthy leaves
 - ◆ More compact, denser growth
- **Pruning perennials** for better growth and flowering

MOST IMPORTANTLY - RELAX AND HAVE FUN!

Contact Diggers Hotline or your local underground utility locating service BEFORE you start digging - It's a FREE service

In Wisconsin file online at diggershotline.com or anywhere in the U.S., including Wisconsin, call 811 at least 3 business days before putting the first shovel in the ground. Once your request is received, Diggers Hotline (or your local locating service) contacts all the appropriate underground utilities. The utility's locators will mark the location of the underground utilities in the work area.

Avoid digging near the marks to reduce the risk of damage, personal injury or even death.



UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS

Check often as more appearances and webinars continue to be added.

MORE WEBINARS & APPEARANCES

April 3rd

Garden Trends

Franklin Public Library

Webinar April 10th

Container Gardening throughout the Year

Webinar April 11th

Seven Steps to Managing Water Where it Falls in Your Yard

April 17th

Landscaping for Birds: A Gardener's Perspective

Heartis Village North Shore

April 18th

Be a Waterwise Gardener

SC Johnson's Golden Rondelle Theater

April 20th

Why & How of Pruning Hydrangeas and Other Shrubs

Pasquesi Home and Gardens

April 27th

Creating an Eco-friendly, Low Maintenance Landscape

Ridges & Rivers Book Festival

April 28th

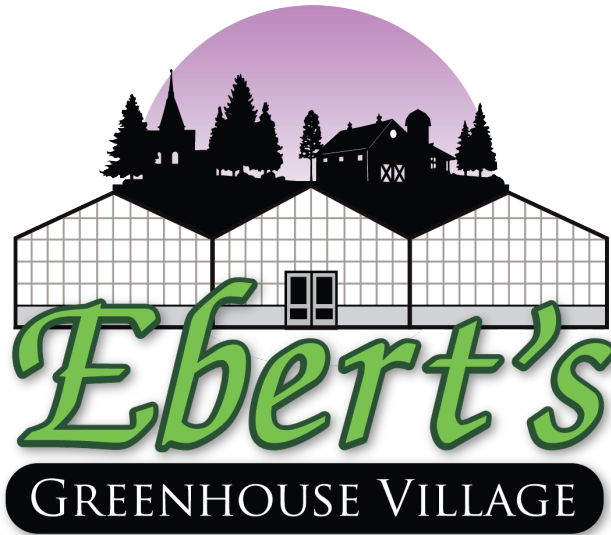
Flowering Trees and Shrubs for Your Garden

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Webinar May 1st

Ornamental Fruits and Vegetables

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DVD SERIES

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- Your Best Garden and Landscape
- Container Tips and Techniques

BOOKS

- Midwest Gardener's Handbook
- Small Space Gardening
- Midwest Lawn Guides
- Minnesota & Wisconsin Getting Started Garden Guide
- Month-by-Month Gardening in Minnesota & Wisconsin
- Michigan Getting Started Garden Guide
- Month-by-Month Gardening in Michigan
- Month-by-Month Gardening in Iowa



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