



# Keep a Good Garden Journal

BY JILL DEMETRE

Creating your own garden journal is a fun way to keep track of your gardening successes. It is equally as important for keeping track of things that didn't go well so you can plan accordingly in following years. I keep track of such things as which plants or vegetables thrived and which ones didn't, what I'd like to have more of next year, and what I used to amend the soil and how well it worked. I also write down whether it was a particularly wet summer, which might inhibit the vegetable or flower production. I enter information about weather, including first and last frost dates, disease and insect problems and how I dealt with them. I make notes to myself, such as "the perennial garden in the backyard is beautiful until the end of June and then it lacks color," so that I'll know to go to the nursery to see what is blooming at that time of year so I can fill that particular need for color. I also jot down when the yard is at its very best, and plan a gathering of friends to have over during that same time the following year.

My journal is a simple three-ring binder that is easily added to. My style is simple. I have note and date sections, and add to it only as needed or desired, so as not to feel the pressure to write something everyday. It contains favorite garden-care articles in plastic sheet protectors and maps of my own gardens listing the plants in each one. This helps refresh my memory in the winter months. It also contains before-and-after photographs to remind me of how far things have come, over the years. I also include sketches or photographs of other gardens that I admire and that inspire me. It's also a good place to keep receipts and warranty information and an inventory of all of my tools. This makes it easy to see if something is missing, and if any of my tools are in need of normal routine maintenance. I also have a zippered plastic bag containing any leftover seeds that the Food and Drug Administration says remain fresh for three years.

Be sure to keep track of the rewards of gardening, including which plants drew the most butterflies and what types of birds that came to visit. You'll then know what to get more of to keep these creatures coming to add more enjoyment to your gardens.

Careful planning of any improvements that you do to your yard will be well worth your time, in the long run, plus saving you the time and money of having to redo things. You should have a section of your journal dedicated for just this purpose. Include color schemes, photos, and articles so that you'll have all of your resources in one place thus making the process of planning more efficient. This is a good place to include any research that you have done regarding each plant's water needs, sun exposure and wind tolerance. Once your new project is ready to begin, you'll have all of the information handy. Also include in your journal any fun ideas that you come across that you would like to try in the future.

Many types of journals that are made specifically for gardening can be found in bookstores and garden centers or ordered on line – or your garden journal can be as simple as a spiral notebook. I like the format of the three-ring notebook, because it is so easy to add information, and over time, sections can be reorganized to suit your needs. You can also get creative with the journal cover, and personalize it any way that you wish, by downloading graphics, using rubber stamps, photographs, scrapbooking paper or using pretty seed packets.

The sky is the limit. Just create a fun page and insert it into the plastic cover. The whole point is to have a central place where your garden information is held.

You'll be surprised at how much information you will acquire. It's always fun to look back to the beginning of how your garden started. You'll soon instinctively know what works and what does not and feel more confident in the gardening decisions that you make.

Your garden journal will be a special place to browse through in the winter months for dreaming up new things to try once the weather breaks. Make a dark winter day seem much brighter.

Happy gardening!

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## Spring-Planted Bulbs, Corms and Roots

### QUICK FACTS...

- Locating a flower bed for spring-planted bulbs requires careful thought about exposure, soil type, and flower height, color and time of flowering.
- If the bed has been used for several seasons with many additions of fertilizer and organic matter, it may be beneficial to have a soil test done on the planting area.
- As soon as the vegetative top of the plant dies down, dig the corms. Remove the withered corm, and store the new corms in a frost-free location over winter.

### ABOUT BULBS

The term "bulb" refers to true bulbs and other bulb-like structures such as corms, tubers, tuberous roots and stems, and rhizomes. These structures are natural adaptations that store food to aid in the plant's survival during unfavorable cold, hot or droughty weather.

### SITE SELECTION

Locating a flower bed for spring-planted bulbs requires



careful thought about exposure, soil type, and flower height, color and time of flowering. Deciduous trees provide little shade in the spring, but as trees leaf-out, the leaves may create a shade too dense for most bulb and bulb-like plants, except those that are very shade-tolerant. Soil type in most home gardens cannot be changed readily, but soil can be modified with the use of fertilizers and organic materials. Flower color and size are important to ensure the flower is planted in the right place to showcase the flower's hues and mature height. In addition, time of bloom may determine flower location to maximize bloom sequence.



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