

Caring For your Garden



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Whether you are testing out your green thumb or have been in the hobby business of gardening for many years, it's important that you are using the right tools to prune, dig, water and weed. If you are not, there is a good chance you are wasting a lot of time and effort and your garden is not up to the standard you had hoped for.	18
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<u>Pruning shears: Pruning is an important part of the gardening process used for light shrub and rose pruning as well as cutting back perennials and deadheading. Pruning shears provide a clean cut that will not pinch the stems and are designed for plants. There are several different types of pruning shears out there including lopping pruners and hand pruners. Choose pruning shears that are designed for your flower bed and shrubbery. Lopping pruners are usually best for thicker branches while hand pruners work best with smaller plants and bushes.</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>A digging spade: Unless you have a dog that loves to dig exactly where you command him to, then you are going to need a digging spade. Digging spades can actually make digging fun as they take the place of using your fingers. Make sure you choose a digging spade with a varnished hardwood handle for a more comfortable grip. Digging spades are best used for loosening up hard dirt in your garden. Another option is a garden fork which can lift out those extra tough soil spots.</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>A rake: leaves are bound to fall in the summer and they will not make an exception when it comes to your garden. Garden rakes are pretty standard at any hardware or grocery store and come in various styles and materials including plastic, steel and wood. Fall leave cleanup is inevitable so why not make it fun by choosing a brightly colored rake in a flirty red or purple?</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>A watering hose: finally, you are going to most certainly need a high quality garden hose. The best garden hoses are those with at least four to six ply thickness. Try a watering wand extension to project the perfect volume of water onto your garden.</u>	<u>18</u>
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How to Take Care of Fragrant Flowers in your Garden

One of the most common reasons why people love flowers so much is because of the beautiful fragrance they emit. A beautiful, natural garden overflowing with scented flowers can brighten up anyone's day, even after a work week from hell. The smell of flowers connotes happy occasions such as summer days, birthdays, weddings and celebrations. This is one of the reasons most gardeners will choose flowers that smell divine as their flowers du jour.

Some of the best fragrant flowers for your garden include Arabian jasmine, banana shrub, butterfly bush, confederate jasmine, garden phlox, gardenia, heliotrope, hyacinth, angels' trumpet and roses. All of these have a unique and delicious scent that will leave your outdoor area smelling beautiful. However, some of the most fragrant and beautiful flowers also take more care than you would expect. To really get that beautiful, spring time freshness smell from your flowers, keep the following tips in mind:

- Bright, thick and colorful petals on a flower can suggest a beautiful smell as well. Look for flowers that have thick colorful petals when choosing flowers. You can also ask the sales associate at your local garden center about the smell that will be emitted in full bloom.
- Fragrant flowers enjoy having company in their garden. One of the ways to increase the smell of your flowers is to plant trees, vines, perennials and shrubs along the garden bed with your fragrant flowers. Having neighbors will help your flowers show off their smell.
- To make the most of your garden care smell, think about choosing flowers that bloom at different times. That way the smells of each flower will not contradict one another and you will have beautiful and varying smells all season long.
- Most flowers that are lacking in a sweet smell are so because they are thirsty. Make sure you give your flowers enough water to keep them healthy. In the hot season this may mean watering them every day or every other day.
- Finally, make sure your flowers have enough moisture and ventilation. Hot and dry gardens will not fare well for those fragrant flowers. Although they may grow, the smell will be lacking. Try to plant your flowers in an area where the air is gentle and the moisture content is high in the air. Humidity is not a fragrant flower's friend.

Beginning Garden Care for the New Home Owner

A garden can make or break your outdoor living environment. In many instances, it is not until you own your first home that you truly begin to understand the importance of good garden care. Perhaps you watched Mom and Dad slave away outside in the summers while you remained in the air conditioned house thinking about how crazy they were. After all, it's just a garden! But now that you have your own home, now that the rooms are decorated to perfection, now that the walls are painted and the carpets installed, now that the house looks like a home, you most likely want the same for your front and backyard garden.

But where do you begin?

- First of all, have a look at your garden situation. Is it an overgrown mess or is it as barren as the desert? In most instances, you are hoping for the latter. If not, then you will have to spend some time weeding, whacking and removing those overgrown weeds, roots and all.
- Next, you will need some gardening tools. Head to the local hardware shop and pick up the following: a gardening hose, pruning shears, a digging spade, a wheel barrow

(optional), a shovel (especially if you have a big mess ahead of you), a weeder and a garden knife. This will get you started.

- Take care of your soil. Before you can plant away, you need to make sure your soil is up to par. Good growing soil will retain moisture but does not stay too wet. You need to find that happy crumbly cake balance in your dirt. If your soil is too wet, too dry, too crumbly, too sticky or anything else, you can add composted manure or leaf mould which can bring the texture to a happy medium.
- Start with annuals. Annuals are easy to plant, easy to grow and easy to maintain with water two or three times a week. Many annuals can be grown from seed and will thrive in both the sun and the shade, according to the plant tag or the seed package.
- Finally, make sure you do the research and ask for assistance when it comes to choosing plants. Sure, roses are beautiful but did you know that they need at least six hours in the sun each day? Make sure you always read the labels to determine the best weather and climate conditions for your choice of plants.

At Home Remedies for Garden Care

Is your garden looking a little under the weather? Why not save yourself a trip to the garden centre and instead opt to use household foods and items to give your plants the lift they may need? Below we have listed some of the common household items you would find in your pantry that can help maintain a beautiful blossoming green garden without using harmful and expensive chemicals from the shop.

- Grubby Gardening Hands: no matter how hard you scrub, do your hands still look like you've been digging in the dirt all weekend long? Try rubbing some olive oil and sugar between your palms which can get rid of those soil stained hands.
- Flower Fertilizer: tired of harmful chemicals? Why not make sure of your own banana peels by sticking them just below the surface of the soil. They will rot quickly and provide your plants with magnesium, calcium, sulfur, phosphorus, sodium and silica.
- Another great at home fertilizer is ground coffee. Coffee is high in nitrogen and can particularly help with your rose bush care. Still a small sprinkle is all your garden needs.
- Indoor Garden Care: If you have an indoor garden and are worried about the state of your indoor plants, try using castor or mineral oil as a massaging lotion on their leaves. This will leave them looking green and healthy.
- Brown Be Gone: gardenias and camellia's are beautiful flowers for your garden. However, in many instances the leaves will turn brown leaving your garden looking a little dull and uncared for. A simple solution to this is table salt. That's right, just sprinkle a little bit on the plants and the brown will go away.

- Worm No Worries: grab a few matchsticks and place them soil end down. This little trick will repel sulfur into the garden and keep the worms away.
- Tea for Two: next time you make a cup of tea, save the tea leaves or the last bit of tea from the pot. Sprinkle it as a fertilizer for your garden or loosen the soil and place the leaves around the base of the plant. Tea is filled with essential nutrients that are especially great for roses, azaleas, violets, and hydrangeas.

It's amazing the difference those everyday household items can make when it comes to garden care!

Common Garden Problems: And Easy Garden Care Solutions

Having garden care problems? Who doesn't? Sometimes, no matter what you do, your garden does not look as good as you'd expect or hoped. However, sometimes there are simple solutions to your problems. Before you throw out those gardening gloves and accept your lack of a green thumb, check the list below for easy at home solutions for some of the most common gardening tribulations.

- Weeds are ruining my Garden: fighting against weeds can seem like a constant uphill battle. One of the reasons weeds become such a problem is because only half of the plant is actually attacked. Your best bet when it comes to weeds is to purchase a herbicide and a weeding wand which will make it easier to monitor the amount of chemical you use and where it goes. Spread the weed killer on mature leaves as well as new growth.
- Grass and Weeds keep creeping into my paved areas: do you have grass and weeds creeping up on your stairs, your driveway and elsewhere where they should be. Instead of spending a fortune on pesticides and dousing your driveway with chemicals, a great solution is to mix water and vinegar or salt water. Be careful where you spray however and this mixture will also kill your plants
- My lawn looks a little worse of wear: lawn care is an art form. There could be many reasons why your lawn is looking a little yellow or growing in odd. One of the main culprits is pet urine. If you notice dry dead patches of lawn, then there is a good chance that is where your dog is doing his business. Another way to stop your lawn from getting lawn disease or fungus is to water your lawn in the morning instead of at night. The extra moisture at night can cause fungus and disease.
- Yellow Leaves on my plants: yellow leaves suggest two things: one, your plant is hungry, or two, you may have an insect problem. Check the leaves for sap sucking black or red mites or other insects. If you notice teeny tiny crawlers on your plants, then head to the local garden centre and purchase an oil spray or pesticide.

A final reminder when it comes to garden care is that gardening has a lot to do with trial and error, especially if you are just beginning. Some plants may die; some plants may flourish. This is all part of the gardening fun.

Dogs Beware: Garden Care for the Dog Friendly Home

Sure, you love your dog. He's cute, he's cuddly and he's a bundle of rambunctious fun. However, he also chooses the worst places to do his business. That's right, in your garden! But that's not all. Dog urine is harmful to the grass and can leave burnt patches all over the lawn. So, how can you put an end to this horrible destruction of your lawn without forcing your dog to move away?

Read on:

- First of all, if your dog is still a youthful trainable puppy, there is still hope! Keep him on a leash when putting him outside and guide him to the same peeing spot every time. Try to create a potty area with wood chips or pea gravel as the surface. Dogs tend to want to urinate on absorbent surfaces. Another option is to purchase urine bags from your local vet which may teach your pup the right place to pee.
- Dog feces are another story. Some dogs are embarrassed to drop anywhere and thus will choose a spot in the corner as their bathroom. Other dogs will go whenever, wherever and even spread it around for your pleasure. There are two ways to stop this: first, set up a designated doggy bathroom in a certain corner of your yard and reward the little guy anytime he goes. Do not allow him to go anywhere else. You may need to monitor his activity for the first few weeks but eventually he will figure it out on his own. Secondly, you can clean it up. It's a tough job but someone has to do it. Make it part of your daily morning routine before you have a cup of coffee or a shower. Do a stroll around the yard with a pooper scooper and garbage bag and run a sprinkler on the lawn to remove the smell.
- Another annoying doggy habit is digging. If your little pup is a digger, it's time to put a stop to it now! Try putting a piece of steel or wood over the areas where your dog enjoys digging. Choose a designated doggy bone area that is not your garden and bury bones there for him to find, or keep him occupied with other treats and games such as a kong. And, if he does not stop his incessant digging perhaps it's time for the doggy crate or maybe even doggy obedience school.

Garden Care for all Flower and Vegetable Life

All gardens are different and so are the plants, flowers and vegetable life that you choose to grow. While some plants love the sun, others will only grow in shade. While some plants need watering every day, others only need watering when they are young. So how do you know what

type of care your garden plant life needs? Read on as we list four of the most common types of backyard gardens and tips for tender loving care.

- **Shrubs:** shrubs that are well kept look great in any garden type. However, the trick is to keep them pruned before they get away from you. Shrubs need to be watered when they are small and growing but after the initial growth, shrubs can survive with just the rain from the sky. To maintain shrubs you will need to cut them back but you will not need to worry about watering them constantly.
- **Annuals:** annuals are seasonal flowers that come in a variety of colors and types. Annuals need a lot of water and care as they have a very short life. When it comes to caring for annuals, make sure you water them at least twice a week and every day during the hot months. Sprinkle some fertilizer in with the water three to four times a month to keep them growing strong and healthy.
- **Roses:** roses are one of the most common types of flower garden which is why they are in a category all their own. Roses need about six hours of sunlight per day. Make sure you place them somewhere where the sun shines. To keep your roses looking their best, sprinkle some coffee ground or tea leaves in the soil around them. The nutrients will soak into the roses for a more fragrant and colorful bloom.
- **Vegetable gardens:** vegetable gardens are not only pretty but they can also save you the time, effort and money of hitting up your local produce section in the grocery store. When you are planting a vegetable garden, give each vegetable a sufficient amount of room to grow. Most vegetable gardens work the best when they are planted in rows. Some of the fastest and easiest vegetables to grow include pumpkin and zucchini and other delicious and nutritious veggies that you can grow in your own backyard include carrots, beans, peas, potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce, corn and cucumber.

Garden Care for the New Neighbor: Ways to Make Yourself (and your garden) Known in your New Neighborhood

Are you new to the neighborhood and want to make a great first impression? Why not show your sense of style with a great garden? Below we've listed four tips to garden care that will ensure your garden is the envy of the neighborhood and the talk of the town.

- **Know what to expect from your surroundings.** Before you go ahead and rip out the old weeds and plan for a new garden in the front corner, it's a good idea to watch how the sun rises and sets in your back and front yard. You will need to know this in order to determine what flowers to get – sun lovers or shade seekers- and where to place your new garden.
- **Get the whole family involved.** There is no better way to present your family to the neighbors than working on a garden together. Get dad to mow the lawn and the kids to help plant the annuals while you work on weeding the overgrowth. Your new neighbors

will most likely come over to say hello and comment on your family orientated garden design.

- Show your true colors. You cannot always judge a book by its cover but you are sometimes able to judge a person by their preference in garden care. Are you a bright bubbly person? Why not plant some bulbs and colorful perennials just in time for summer? Are you more of a structured, organized person? Then make your garden bed straight forward, spacing out your plants to perfection. Do you love to cook? Why not plant some herbs and vegetables in the back yard?
- Be considerate of the neighbor's needs. If you neighbors have young kids, then perhaps it's not a good idea to put your rose bushes right beside their fence as young children can easily prick themselves when playing in the yard. Furthermore, consider asking your neighbors if they have any serious plant allergies, just in case.

Keep in mind that a great garden can actually add value to your home. A beautiful front or backyard garden always look warm and inviting and, if you ever plan on selling your house, can also act as a welcome mat for a high offer. A well kept garden is often a good clue that the house is in the same condition and can add thousands to your home value when (or if) you do decide to move on.

Garden Care in All Seasons

Many people think that spring and summer are the two most important times for gardening. However, although spring is great for harvesting and summer is great for blooming, it is also important to do your garden care in the fall to ensure a successful gardening season the next year around.

In the Fall

Fall is the time to prepare for your garden for its winter sleep. Most people will start by cutting everything back and pruning your plants as much as you can. Get rid of all the fallen or broken leaves and put them in the bin. Make sure you till the soil during the fall season as well in preparation for the harsh winter. Add some extra mulch to your perennials to keep them warm during the cold season. It's also a good idea to add some compost or manure to the soil.

If you want to expand your garden during the fall, the best plants to buy are bulbs. You can plant them in the fall and they will blossom for spring. As soon as the dreary days are behind you and the ice melts from the ground, your garden will sprout new beautiful bulbs in place. Fall is also the best time to till any more soil if you plan on expanding your garden. Many people will wait until spring but it's a good idea to prep the area for the New Year in the fall.

Time for Spring

Spring and garden care go hand in hand. Most people will start their garden ritual as soon as the winter days are behind them. Spring is the best time to get down and dirty, pulling and

pruning your plants. Spring is also the time to plant new flowers, especially annuals and perennials. May is the best time for annual planting. Make sure you also fertilize during the spring.

Summer of Garden Care

Summer is all about maintenance. This means you need to pull out the weeds that grow, cut off the dead leaves, prune them back and constantly water your babies. Summer time is the best time to spend in the garden. Most people will water once or twice a week, more during those extra hot days. Add fertilizer to the watering mixture twice a month as well.

Garden care is not something that can be done sporadically. It will take some time and patience, as well as trial and error, but, with the right garden care every season, your garden will continue to blossom and grow every year.

Gardening for Thought: What to Consider when it Comes to Garden Care

Before you head to the garden centre with your credit card, ready to buy up a storm, you should always have a brainstorming party in your head to determine what your goals, your limits and your plans are for your garden.

Think about your Sense of Style

Gardening is an expression of you. Take your time when picking out flowers and do not be afraid to ask for help when it comes to choosing the right plants for your backyard. When you visit a garden centre, the staff will be able to answer any questions you have.

Try to pick flowers that will work with your personality. If you are bright and bubbly, choose flowers that are the same. If you love order and structure, then look for a flower arrangement that suits you. Consider your garden like another room in your house; get creative when decorating and caring for your garden.

Think about your Backyard

The first thing you need to think about when it comes to your back yard (or front yard) is where the garden would be best suited. Do you have kids that love to play soccer and may try to use your garden as a goal net? Do you have a dog that adores digging, especially when the garden is right beside his dog house? Think about where the sun sets and how much sun certain areas get during the day.

Next, think about your outdoor décor. Try to pair your garden to the theme of your outdoor area. If you can, match the flowers to the table patterns, the potted plant designs and the sun umbrella style. This can be a great decorating challenge.

Think about your Lifestyle

Are you outside a lot during the spring and summer months or do you usually work long hours and barely have enough energy to make dinner let alone tend to the plants on a daily basis? For

those who spend their evening relaxing at home, enjoying weekend barbeques and lounging on the patio, it can be easy to simply incorporate a watering and fertilizing routine into your nightly or morning habits. However, for those who work crazy hours, those who tend to forget easily and those who do not have a daily routine, watering the plants may escape you and thus, may cause your gardening hobby to flop.

Good Garden Care starts with Good Plants: What to Look for in Plant Selection

Good garden care does not start with your green thumb (or lack thereof). Good garden care starts with your plant selection. If you do not choose the right plants for your gardening situation, then you are already selling yourself short and putting a halt to your gardening dreams.

- It all starts with the garden centre. You need to choose a well maintained high quality garden centre that offers plenty of choice and quality plants. Look to see if the garden centre has arranged the plants logically and labeled the various plants for a better understanding. Garden centers are the Mecca of garden care and thus there should be a variety of how-to-grow information, expected size, climate conditions and various tidbits of information about every plant. Furthermore, a good garden centre should employ knowledgeable, qualified and friendly staff who can help you out. And finally, garden centers should look aesthetically pleasing. After all, they are the garden care experts and thus their set up should be beautiful.
- Look for balanced, healthy looking growth with well colored leaves. This can be a good indication that the plant is healthy. Leaves that are yellow, brown, stunted or slimy can suggest a sign of insect infection, wilting, frost or other diseases.
- Don't be fooled by color. Make sure you do not choose plants simply because they are colorful and in bloom. This may be an indication that they are almost out of season. Although a plant may be blooming in the store, it may not do the same in your garden. Make sure you read the labels.
- Know your garden environment. Some plants thrive in shade; others must have sun to survive. Think about your garden and how the sun/shade hits throughout the day. Some of the sun-loving plants include perennial flowers and roses while shade-hoppers include astible, hosta, cranesbill, columbine, foxgloves, bleeding heart and many more. The seasons and climate preference should be on the labels.
- Check the roots. If it's possible, check the plant's roots by taking it out of the container. There should be a good proportion of roots to soil. If there are too many roots with weeds or moss around them, this is a good indication that it has been in the pot for a long time and may not fare well in your backyard garden.

Herb Garden Care: Types, Tricks and Tips for Success

Looking for a fresh way to save on herbs, to spruce up your meals and to glorify your garden? Why not add some herbs to your gardening mixture?

Types of Herbs for Herb Gardens

There are a variety of different herbs that are easy to grow at home and also helpful for everyday household cooking and ailment cures. Herbs, like plants, are usually classified into three different categories:

- Perennials- live for several years. These include catnip, chives, lavender, lemon, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme.
- Annuals- grow for one season and must be planted each spring again. These include basil, chamomile, cilantro, cumin, dill, fennel plus many more.
- Biennial- grows for two years and end at must be planted after the end of the second season. This includes parsley.

What is needed for Herb Growth?

The first thing you need for successful herb growth is moderately rich soil with excellent drainage. If you find that your soil does not have this, you might consider growing the hers in a raised bed or containers.

Next, you will need the perfect planting position. This all comes down to your needs. What will your herb garden be used for? If you plan of using the herbs for cooking purposes (and why wouldn't you), then consider planting your herb garden near the house, or at least within picking distance. You do not want to have to trample through flowers in order to reach the chives.

Herbs prefer the sun so it's important to also plant them somewhere where they will get sun for at least six hours a day. The herbs that can handle shade include chives, cilantro, dill and mint; however, most other herbs are sun lovers.

Herb Garden Care

Most herb gardens are fairly easy to tend to. In fact, more herbs can live on about an inch of water per week. If your herbs are in a bed or a container, you will need to give them more water than this as they tend to dry out faster.

Another thing to always be on the lookout for are insects. Although the beautiful smells that herbs give off will usually repel any pests, they can still get attacked by insects such as aphids. A common herb disease is powdery mildew which you should always be on the lookout for.

And finally, when it comes to herb garden care, make sure your kids know not to trample on your garden. More importantly, make sure your dog, cat or other pets know that the herb garden is off limits for eating, digging, urinating and any other doggy behavior.

How Not to Care for your Garden: Common Garden Care Mistakes to Avoid

Sometimes the best way to learn how to do something right is to learn how to do something wrong. That's why we have outlined four mistakes that gardeners make so you know what to avoid in your own garden care endeavors.

- **Till, Soil and Go:** many people will work their butts off for one weekend in the spring, bringing in soil, clearing away overgrowth and purchasing a nursery full of bright beautiful plants. However, once the initial ground work has been laid and the flowers are in place, they walk away. Gardening is not a weekend task; it is a fall, spring and summer job that requires constant attention. You will need to keep your garden maintained long after the planting has occurred. This may include watering, fertilizing, tilling the soil, pruning back the large leaves and taking the necessary actions for insects, pests and weeds.
- **Too much Love:** many people will also love their plants to death. Too much of a good thing can always cause issues. Many people will devote too much time to watering and fertilizing their plants which can cause them to become too wet. Too much wetness can lead to growth problems, drowning, as well as fungal infections and diseases. Most plants need to be watered twice or three times a week. When the days are really hot during the summer, you may need to water them every day but that does not mean dumping a bathtub full of water on them.
- **The wrong plants for the wrong atmosphere:** another big issue surrounding garden care is to purchase and place plants in surroundings they are not suited for. Check to see if your plants need sun or shade, water requirements, soil, fertilizer, etc. All of this information should be located on the labels that come with the plants.
- **Shopping blindfolded:** it's important that you do the required research when it comes to garden care. Do not just go into a shop and pick the prettiest plants on the aisles. Most plants that are in full bloom in the store are past their blossoming prime. Ask for assistance, read the labels and consider your garden surroundings and environment for successful plant growth. You can check online for the best plants for your garden situation.

How to Choose and Maintain Annuals

Annuals are a popular choice when it comes to a backyard garden or outdoor area. This is because they are easy to plant, straightforward to maintain and only last one season. For those who like to switch it up every season, planting a few annuals in the spring will ensure a bright and colorful summer.

Visiting the Nursery

Annuals can be planted anywhere and come in a variety of colors and types. All annuals will have a tag that will help you determine the condition of growth best suited for your annual. Annuals are great in flower beds, in potted plants, in rock gardens and anywhere else inside or outside the house. Furthermore, they are fairly inexpensive and can be purchased from any garden centre.

Annuals will come in small plastic containers, usually in a set of four to six. It's best to choose annuals that are little baby plants that have not bloomed yet. Check the tags to see when they will bloom, what they need and what you can expect when you take your new little babies home from the nursery.

Taking your Annuals Home

When you get your annuals home, it is time to plant them. Many people will plant their annuals in potted gardens or in garden beds. A variety of annuals in a potted plant can really brighten up your outdoor area. If you are planting your annuals in a garden bed, it's best to add space between each one.

Make a daily routine of checking on your annuals and watering them three times a week or every day during those extra hot months. Add fertilizer to the water mixture two to four times a month. It's important to keep your annuals well watered throughout the summer and place them in their best growing conditions. Some are made for the shade; some are made for the sun.

The End of the Season

All good things must come to an end and this is the case for annuals. Annuals are only meant to last for one season so once they have blossomed and are starting to look a little worse for wear, it's time to take them to the compost. The good thing about annuals are, next year, you can start the process all over again and choose a whole new set of beautiful flowers to highlight your yard.

How to Make your Seedlings Grow

Growing a garden takes a lot of tender, loving care. Sure, it may not be as challenging as growing a family, but you need to give your garden love and attention to ensure that those little seedlings grown into something beautiful. The best way to ensure that your seedlings will blossom into beautiful flowers and plants one day is to know what to look for:

- When you are starting a garden from seedlings, use propagation kits which can be found at any garden or hardware stores. Most propagation kits come in a four or six pack and are plastic. Consider the propagation kits the cribs for your little seedlings where they can comfortably grow in a smaller space. If your propagation kits do not come with drainage holes on the bottom, take a knife and poke some out yourself.
- Always read the instructions. Although many gardeners can go with their gut, it's always a good idea to follow the seed packet directions to ensure the best success. Seed packet directions include timing, light, sowing depth, germination and growing temperatures, all of which are important in the growing and nurturing stages of seed development.
- Instead of using gardening soil right away, use a sterile seed starting mixture. Again, this is like baby food for your little seedlings. You need to let them try the baby food before they move onto solids. Sterile seed starting mix should be as moist as a wrung out sponge for the best growth conditions.
- Lighting is important for the growth of baby seedlings. Make sure you keep them by a bright window or a fluorescent tube (if you have it). Seedlings like to have sun for about 16 hours a day and shade for about 8 hours a day, just like humans.
- When you notice your seedlings sprouting leaves it's time to give them fertilizer along with their watering once a week.
- When your seedlings are ready to go outside, make sure you start them off slowly. Put them in the shade first for about a half a day and let them gradually get used to the outdoor environment. Do the same when it comes to sunny and windy areas in the yard. This takes a lot of time and effort, not to mention movement, but, in the end, your little seedlings will thank you. And it's worth it.

How to Make Garden Care a Fun Filled Family Activity

Gardening is a great hobby for those who love the peace and quiet of outdoors. However, it can also be a fun activity for the entire family. If you are looking for an outdoor activity this summer that your whole family can get involved in, then why not start a family garden?

Pick Together

Head to the garden center together and stroll the aisles as a family. Let your kids all pick out a few flowers that they want in the garden. Just make sure they are suitable for what you are looking for. Kids tend to pick favorites and they will become devoted to ensuring that their flowers of choice grow the best. Let everyone in the family have a few favorite plants to nurture and care for. Plants are a lot easier to maintain, especially considering the alternative of a family dog. A great gardening choice for summer is annuals which are fairly easy to plant and tend for and only last for one season. After all, once September rolls around its back to school time, the garden will most likely become your own responsibility.

Allocate Jobs

One of the best ways to get the kids involved (and away from that couch/internet/Xbox/etc) is to give everyone a certain task in the garden. Of course, this will depend on the age of the kids. You do not want to put your two year old in charge of weeding after all. Some great jobs for kids include watering, pruning (if a little older), raking, emptying the wheel barrow and fertilizing. Make sure you also give your spouse a task all his own, perhaps like mowing the lawn, placing the rocks or any of the more strenuous activities.

Reward the Hard Work

Sure, a beautiful garden should be reward enough but often kids want a more tangible reward. Perhaps give in to the constant summer calls of the ice cream van and enjoy a cool treat in the backyard overlooking your new beautiful garden. After a weekend in the garden, maybe a family dinner and movie night is in order?

If you are looking for cheap, fun and easy ways to spend the summer with your family, then gardening is a great way to bask in the summer sunshine, work together as a family, and enjoy one another's company for the entire season.

Winter Garden Care: How to Make Your Garden Last through the Tough Season

As soon as summer is over, you need to start preparing for another long and cold winter. This means packing the kids back up to school, returning to a regular routine and putting the garden to sleep for the winter. Your garden has enjoyed a long and bountiful spring and summer but now that fall has rolled around, it's time to put your garden to bed.

Most people think that spring and summer are garden seasons but, as gardeners know, fall is just as important. Fall is the time to take extra special care to ensure your plants last for the winter. Below is a checklist to ensure that you get everything done before the first snow falls.

- First of all, you need to take extra care with all your winter crops. If you have leeks, kale, parsnip, Brussels sprouts or anything other winter crop, put an extra amount of mulch around them. This will comfort and protect them through the colder months.
- Next, gather up all the leaves that have fallen in the last couple of weeks. Go through your garden and pick up any dead vegetation and additional dead leaves and add them

to your compost bin. Take special care not to pick up any seeds in the process. They should be left in your garden.

- Don't forget about the weeds. Fall season is also the time to get rid of any access weeds that have crawled into your garden. Many people will also get rid of any vines that have taken over their garden as well, but others like to keep the vine for a more Christmassy feel.
- You need to take extra special care of your soil during the colder climate. Till the soil to start with and then add some compost to give it more nutrients. For those who are thinking about expanding their garden, the fall season is also the time to till more ground and prepare it for planting and harvesting in the spring. It is a lot easier to till the soil now than after the frost. Furthermore, this will prepare your ground for garden season in the New Year.
- Finally, don't forget about your garden tools. They need to be cleaned and free of dirt which can stick to the tools causing problems next year. Linseed oil can help keep your wooden handle tools in good shape. Make sure you dry your tools after washing and scrubbing them as the extra water can cause rust.

More than Just Plants: Garden Care for All Corners of Your Yard

Your garden is most likely your pride and joy of your front, back or side yard. It may be the centerpiece, the first thing neighbors notice, or the patch of land that ties the whole house together. Although making sure the flowers are watered, the soil is moist and the plants are flourishing is very important when it comes to your garden care, you also need to think about what the rest of your yard is doing to your garden. Proper garden care is not just about plants; it's about finding that feng Sui, that harmonious balance in your outdoor area.

Your Garden Theme

The first thing to consider when it comes to your garden and surrounding area is a theme. Of course, a theme is not critical to any garden but it can be a fun way to tie in your furniture, your outdoor décor and your garden plant choices.

For example, if you have a garden with a lot of blues, green and purples, then perhaps a tropical themed outdoor area would be fun. Try funky Chinese lanterns as lighting and look for warm greens and blues for your outdoor furniture. Lanterns and candles can really brighten up your garden area and come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Add to the tropical feel with festive fruity colored drinks, Hawaiian print table clothes or a flower pattern picnic table set. All of a sudden your garden is much more than just a Mecca of beautiful flowers; it is a backyard holiday dream.

Accessorize

Another great way to spruce up your garden is to add other elements besides just plants. Check out your local garden center for goofy little critters or beautiful Greek statues. A few happy little

frog statues in the garden can give your backyard a fun look. Greek statues or beautiful flowing fountains can create a more whimsical romantic atmosphere.

Lawn and Fence Care

Finally, once you have the accessories, the garden and the furniture matching and in position, you need to ensure that your fence and lawn are up to par. There is nothing worse than having a beautiful backyard garden hidden behind weeds and overgrown grass. Make a habit out of mowing the lawn once every week (or every two weeks). You can also consider coating your deck or fence with a fresh set of paint or wood varnish which can make your backyard garden really sparkle.

Must Have Garden Tools for the Proper Garden Care Year Round

Whether you are testing out your green thumb or have been in the hobby business of gardening for many years, it's important that you are using the right tools to prune, dig, water and weed. If you are not, there is a good chance you are wasting a lot of time and effort and your garden is not up to the standard you had hoped for.

Never fear. Below we've listed the top five must have garden tools for any bright and beautiful garden.

Pruning shears: Pruning is an important part of the gardening process used for light shrub and rose pruning as well as cutting back perennials and deadheading. Pruning shears provide a clean cut that will not pinch the stems and are designed for plants. There are several different types of pruning shears out there including lopping pruners and hand pruners. Choose pruning shears that are designed for your flower bed and shrubbery. Lopping pruners are usually best for thicker branches while hand pruners work best with smaller plants and bushes.

A digging spade: Unless you have a dog that loves to dig exactly where you command him to, then you are going to need a digging spade. Digging spades can actually make digging fun as they take the place of using your fingers. Make sure you choose a digging spade with a varnished hardwood handle for a more comfortable grip. Digging spades are best used for loosening up hard dirt in your garden. Another option is a garden fork which can lift out those extra tough soil spots.

A rake: leaves are bound to fall in the summer and they will not make an exception when it comes to your garden. Garden rakes are pretty standard at any hardware or grocery store and come in various styles and materials including plastic, steel and wood. Fall leave cleanup is inevitable so why not make it fun by choosing a brightly colored rake in a flirty red or purple?

A watering hose: finally, you are going to most certainly need a high quality garden hose. The best garden hoses are those with at least four to six ply thickness. Try a watering wand extension to project the perfect volume of water onto your garden.

Additional must-have gardening tools include a weeder, garden knife, hedge shears and a wheelbarrow to help with the excess dirt, weeds and fallen leaves.

Preparing for a Garden: Things You Must Do

Garden care is not something you can simply pick up one day and start. You need the right know-how, the right tools, and the right area to start with. Below we have listed some of the things you need to consider before planting that first seed.

Get the Help You Need

First and foremost, do the research. You need to know what you are looking for depending on where you want to plant your garden. Go to a garden center that is well staffed and equipped with quality flowers. Most plants will come with a tag so you will know their name, their prime conditions (sun or shade) and their maintenance program. However, any trained staff member can help you and the internet has several of helpful articles of choosing plants for your garden. Some of the things to consider are as follows:

- Where do you want to have your garden?
- Can I afford the cost of tools, equipment, fertilizer and pesticide if the plants get infected?
- Will your flowers be exposed to mostly sun, mostly shade, or a bit of both conditions?
- Do you want your flowers to blossom this season, or every year?
- How much work are you willing to put into your garden?
- Do you want an organic garden?
- What type of flowers will go best with my theme or style of house?

Put in the Time

A garden takes work, not only to start it, but also to maintain it. If you are starting from scratch, you will need to put down soil, add rocks (or anything else), purchase manure, fertilizer and garden tools and get down and dirty. Planting a garden may take more than one weekend. However, after you have done the initial planting, the work is not done. You will need to constantly water your plants, adding fertilizer whenever necessary. You will also need to prune and tidy up your garden of any weeds, overgrown leaves or dead plants.

During the summer, some gardens will need watering every day, especially during those extra hot July and August months. Furthermore, garden care should be done in spring, summer and fall. If you only have a little time to spare in, say, the summer, stick to annuals which only last a

season. If you want your garden to blossom every year and are prepared for the extra work, try perennials which will last several seasons.

Pros and Cons to Caring for a Garden: Is Gardening Right for You

Trying to decide if you should plant a garden in that empty space in your back yard? Or, perhaps you are not cut out for the trials and tribulations on gardening and that space would be much better suited to a basketball court, spa or outdoor shed. We've listed the pros and cons to caring for any garden so you can know what you're in for. Weigh the pros and cons based on your lifestyle to determine if a garden is the right choice for your back or front yard.

The Pros to Garden Care

- It can brighten up your outdoor area- flowers brighten up any occasion. They are a must as a wedding; they are great for cheering up your wife; and they look beautiful as a centerpiece on any table. Flowers can also have this affect to your outdoor area. A garden, either a rock garden, a bed garden or even potted plant gardens bring a sense of color and nature to your otherwise average patio. Coordinate your flower choices based on your outdoor furniture colors and themes.
- It can create a sense of pride- a nice garden says a lot about a person and you will most likely be complimented by passerbyers, neighbors and your family. Your garden becomes your baby and when it flourishes, so does your ego.
- It can be a quite peaceful and enjoyable hobby for anyone.

The Cons to Garden Care

- It can be frustrating. Gardening does not come naturally to everyone and thus many gardeners will spend the next season re planting, re potting and trying again. Don't get discouraged if your garden isn't perfect right away. It takes practice, patience and tender loving care.
- It can be time consuming. Gardening is a hobby and like most hobbies, it takes time. Gardening needs to be done in spring, summer and fall. You will need to prune, pick, till, water, fertilize and plant as much or as little as needed.
- You will get dirty. For those who hate having dirty fingernails, perhaps gardening is not for you.
- It can be expensive. Sure, garden care is not going to cost you as much as installing a free in that spare backyard area but the tools, the soil, the flowers, the plants and the sprays will add up, especially if you plan on growing different flowers every year.

So, You Want to Start a Garden? Garden Care 101

Having your very own garden can be a great feeling, especially when it looks great. A garden can fill you with a sense of pride and can add beauty and value to your home. If you are considering getting started on a garden in your back or front yard, consider these three things before getting started:

Place

First of all, you need to look around your back yard, front yard, or side yard and decide on a place to have a garden. You may need to set up some rocks, do a little weeding and bring in some soil to get the ball rolling. The place you choose should be away from the line of fire of trampling children or urinating pets. Try to pick a place that gets both sun and shade but is not in the middle of your yard where it is hard to maneuver around. It's best to start with a small garden in the corner of your yard and work from there.

Time

Next, garden care takes time and effort. Most people will dedicate several hours to tilling, planting, harvesting, watering, pruning and maintaining every season except for winter. You need to be prepared to put in the work and have that extra hour a week to do so.

Theme

Finally, what kind of garden do you want? There are various garden varieties, all of which can add an element of style to your outdoor area. Many people will choose to grow their own vegetable or herb garden as a way to save on their weekly shopping. Some great garden vegetables include beans, tomatoes, pumpkin, carrots and potatoes. Herb gardens can also be handy as you can grow your own oregano, chives, cilantro, parsley and much more.

However, flower gardens are still the most popular. Many people will choose to plant flowers that match their outdoor decorations and furniture. For example, if you have a swimming pool, then blue flowers can match the water. Or, if you love the colorful reds and pinks, planting roses may brighten up your outdoor area.

When it comes to flower gardens, most garden beginners will start out with annuals as they are the easiest to take care of. You will need to water them twice a week and always consult the directions and sales staff about what your flowers will need. While some flowers love the shade, others need the sun. These things need to be taken into consideration when considering the theme of your new garden.

The Best Conditions and Home Remedy Secrets to Rose Garden Care

Roses are one of the most popular choices when it comes to home gardens. And why not? They are beautiful; they are romantic; and they smell divine. Furthermore, having your very own rose bush allows you to save a small fortune each year on flowers for birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, Valentine's Day and those times when you need to say "I'm Sorry". However,

roses are not the easiest flowers to grow. They are stubborn little things that need the utmost care and the perfect garden environment. Here are some tips for caring for your rose bush and making these beautiful flowers the highlight of your garden.

The Rose Conditions

Roses love the sun. And we mean they love it! Roses tend to grow best when they are in direct sunlight for six hours a day, which means they should be placed in a warm spot in your garden. They will also need good, well drained soil that is able to hold moisture. You should make sure the soil is enriched with manure or compost among other natural fertilizers (see below). Roses

Roses also need a lot of water, especially when they are first planted. Make sure your roses can a good, regular watering at least once a week. Roses need more than the occasional sprinkle. The best time to water your roses is during the mornings which can prevent the risk of fungal disease and flower damage.

It's important to not only choose the right place for your rose bush, but also the right planting conditions. New roses need a lot of watering and usually fare better when planted in the cool moist conditions of spring or fall. As soon as the soil becomes workable and the breeze hits, it's a good idea to get out your gardening gloves and get to work on your roses.

The Rose Remedy

There are several home remedies and natural ingredients that can help keep your roses growing beautifully. The next time you have a friend over for a cup of tea, keep the tea leaves or the leftover drops and sprinkle them into the rose bush garden. You can place the leaves just below the soil. Tea leaves are rich with nutrients that the roses will soak up.

Another option is to use your old coffee ground from your coffee machine. Instead of washing the coffee grinds down the drain, head outside to the garden and sprinkle it on the soil around the roses.

The Different Kinds of Plant Gardens and How to Care for Each Type

Garden care depends on what type of garden you have, or are planning to plant. Below we have listed a few of the most popular flowers and types of gardens so you know what you can expect and how to maintain your garden of choice throughout the year.

- **Border garden:** border gardens are usually placed on the ground, alongside a part of the house or a pool. For example, the front of your house may have a border garden. Border gardens tend to have perennial plants placed with the taller ones at the back and the smaller ones at the front. Many people will also use ground covers (plants that grow along the ground) to fill in the spots. Border gardens can brighten up your house and also create a three dimensional garden feel for your visitors. Ground covers are a great addition to border gardens because they can grow quickly and complete your garden in

no time. Many people will opt for roses in their border gardens in a variety of different colors.

- **Rock gardens:** rock gardens are another popular choice for your front or backyard. Most rock gardens will either have rocks surrounding the garden with plants inside, or rocks spread throughout the garden. Either way, the combination of beautiful shrubs, dark rocks and blossoming flowers can be add a delicate touch to any garden. When it comes to rock gardens, you need a lot more soil as your flowers must grow around the rocks. Make sure you spread your flowers out evenly around the rocks and give them plenty of room to grow. Perennials are best for rock gardens as they come back every year.
- **Potted/Container Gardens:** another popular choice are potted plant gardens. Many people will plant mini gardens in large pots or container around the house. Potted plant gardens look great inside and outside and can brighten up your deck or patio area. Potted plants are fairly easy to maintain. You will need to water them every day during the summer with a watering can and add some fertilizer to the mix twice a month. Potted plants can be annuals or perennials and look best when you choose various colored flowers. You can plant several smaller plants in one pot or opt for a large plant per pot. Try to match your potted plant designs to the color of the flowers, the décor of the furniture, and the table placemats.

What Type of Garden are you Destined to Have?

Looking for the right garden to plant in your backyard but not sure about which type of garden will suit your green thumb? Answer the multiple choice questions below to reveal your gardening personality and which garden is right for you.

What are you looking for out of your garden?

- A few nice flowers placed around the front or back yard to brighten up afternoon barbeques and family dinner parties outside
- An outdoor oasis
- A source of nutritional and delicious treats
- Something green and pretty

How Much Time can you dedicate to Your Garden?

- An hour or so a week, spring and summer, but mostly summer.
- As much as necessary. I'm in it for the long haul.
- A few hours a week.
- Maybe 5 minutes a week, if I remember.

What do you love about gardens?

- The atmosphere they give off- that summer spring feeling
- The vibrant colors and ability to grow so beautifully and that amazing smell of the freshness
- The way they look

How Do You feel about Getting Dirty?

- I'm prefer not to, especially not on a daily basis
- I'm not against it
- If it's for a good cause, I'm all in.
- Eww, dirt. No thanks.

The Results

- If you answered mostly A's: annuals in potted plants or small garden beds will be the best choice for you. Annuals only last for one season which is great for the spring and summer. You can easily pot them around the patio in plants or in a small garden bed. Water four times a week, fertilize twice a month and you're done.
- If you answered mostly B's: perennials and roses in large garden. You are in it for the long haul which means you have the dedication and motivation to do whatever you want. Perennials will last longer and roses will give you the challenge you are looking for.
- If you answered mostly C's: vegetable and herb garden. Growing your own vegetable or herb garden will give you a fresh and colorful garden as well as a great way to save on produce weekly.
- If you answered mostly D's: perhaps gardening is not for you. Instead of raising the garden care bar too high, why not start with a few indoor plants or even a few fake plants to brighten your indoor and outdoor living areas?

Top Nine Garden Care Tips from the Experts

Are you looking for a way to improve your outdoor garden and bring it up a level? How about nine different ways? Then you've come to the right place.

- Your garden is only one part of your yard. To make your garden really stand out, make sure your lawn is nicely mowed and landscaped and that you have the right outdoor accessories to match your garden theme. Consider matching the various flowers to the outdoor furniture patterns.

- Plants and flowers are as sensitive to smoke as humans so if you are a smoking household, try to plant your garden away from your outdoor tobacco area.
- Plants need a rich moisture soil to survive and thrive. The soil should be able to retain moisture but also not too wet. You need to find that happy sponge-like medium when it comes to soil.
- If your soil is not performing the way you want it to, use manure or compost to even it out.
- There are plenty of at-home remedies that act as excellent fertilizer for your garden. This includes tea leaves, coffee grounds and banana peels. Instead of throwing these materials into the garbage, head outside and sprinkle them in your garden.
- The easiest plants to grow and maintain are annuals. For beginning gardeners, start out with annuals which can survive on about two watering days a week.
- All plants are different and have different growing environments. Make sure you always read the label and follow the instructions when it comes to plant care and growth. It's important to provide the right watering and climate conditions for the various types of plants. Plants, like people, can be very very picky.
- Your garden is only as good as the tools you possess; make sure you have the right gardening tools for the jobs and take good care of them by washing them after each use. Leaving dirt on your gardening tools can cause them to rust and need replacement much faster.
- Finally, be aware of the dangers that come with gardening. Kids trampling, insects and pests, harsh weather conditions and playful pets can all affect the growth of your garden. Teach your kids that the garden is off limit for tag; train your dog and cat to do their business elsewhere; and be aware of the various pests and insects that can harm your plants.