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The Weekend Gardener

**- The Busy Persons Guide To A Beautiful Backyard Garden
By Victor K. Pryles**

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- The Busy Person's Guide To A Beautiful Backyard Garden
By Victor K. Pryles

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Introduction

Too many demands, too little time for the joy of gardening? One of the hard facts of modern life is that crammed schedules and crushing workloads seem to conspire to make gardening a threatened pastime.

But everyone wants a lovely garden, a place where the landscape sparkles with refreshment and the beauty of nature. A place where the dirt gets under your fingers; the earth a partner and friend. A setting where you can spend a few restful hours soaking up its beauty and letting it lift your spirit.

Planting your own flowers, developing your own lawn, designing your own garden; these are the joys of gardening that can still be made available today. When you get to pick your own fresh fruits and vegetables you experience why gardening is irresistible to so many lovers of life.

Yet, the long commute to and from work, the few hours we are allotted in our drive to lead successful lives, both financially and socially, seem to lead to the remarkable conclusion, "*A garden? No chance!*"

Most people content themselves with hiring out a landscaping firm to develop and shape a desirable lawn, and perhaps, a trip to the local 'farmers' market', once or twice a season, for fresh vegetables.

But even these compromises are alternatives that turn out to be prohibitive. Landscaping firms can charge thousands of dollars to re-carpet a lawn, hundreds just to maintain it. Prices at the farmers' market, though usually less than found in your grocery store, are still relatively high and require 'special trips' which eat further into your valuable time. Beyond this, as a weekend gardener you must have a garden plan that won't nag at you like a child in distress. The last thing you need, once you've decided to join the ranks of the great gardening class, is to have your precious time further eroded by time consuming garden activities and new projects that seem to spring up like a monster clown at an amusement park's haunted house. No, a garden is a place of joy, and its daily development should be joyful too.

Choosing the right plants, the right garden spaces, and employing the right techniques in taking care of them will turn your weekend adventure into a gardening delight; *a garden that will practically take care of itself.*

On the other hand, a high-maintenance garden has you sweating bullets, brandishing hedge clippers, pruning lawn mowers, yanking weeds, tilling and fertilizing - all eating

up every available hour each Saturday and Sunday. If done wrongly, a garden is a nightmarish ritual of whacking away at bushes, trimming grass, chores upon chores—until you think your work will never end.

Many times this occurs because ill conceived plans for a particular location are made, haphazardly, all of which later come back to haunt you in your efforts to add to the loveliness of your particular piece of real estate.

Your goal may have been to eventually beam with pride and enjoy the reactions and kudos from neighbors and friends; only to discover you've ended up with an unruly, temperamental cluster of shrubs, bushes, flowers, plants, trees, lawn and flagstones— all overgrown and requiring continual surgery.

This book intends to take you away from that nightmare and point you directly toward the garden of your dreams. So, if you want to join Mother Nature hand-in-hand and develop a plan that really works for you in a time friendly way - read on!

The key is making a garden you can take pride and great pleasure in, and do it with the time that's reasonably available to you.

This starts with evaluating your gardens maintenance needs and finding solutions to common high-maintenance problems. From there you need to make choices and develop realistic wish lists.

All of this early planning, covered in this book, will make your garden work, both its maintenance and development, a pleasure. You will systematically create a place of respite, and peace.

In chapter one I'll explain exactly what a weekend garden is, how it can be properly developed, and how you can start using your time effectively.

We'll move on to the lawn, the single largest piece of landscape for most homeowners. We'll learn secrets that great gardeners have used to make the lawn a friend to your weekend efforts instead of a time draining bore.

Then we will create those fast flower gardens you'll simply fall in love with, learn to plant a succulent vegetable garden, have some fun with fruits and develop natural landscapes. Our adventure continues with the best easy-care ways to choose plants to match your time constraints and local environment. I'll even give you an overview of the

plants to use; the tools to employ.

The Appendix to this edition of “The Weekend Gardener”- *The Busy Person’s Guide To A Beautiful Backyard Garden* - includes a step-by-step annual calendar of gardening activities and a USDA zone map to help you choose the plants that match your climate. All in all this is an ambitious book that wants to deliver you from the drudgery and time intensive garden into the bright, sun-splashed, happy weekend garden of your very own.
Victor K. Pryles

Chapter 1: The Weekend Garden



Just what is a weekend garden and how does it differ from other gardens?

Simply stated, it's about time. Time that you spend tending your garden. Even though the demands of your contemporary lifestyle may make great demands on you, this doesn't mean you can't also have this delightful pastime of gardening.

You want your garden to bring pleasure and satisfaction,— not provoke anxiety because there just isn't enough time to plant the petunias, tie up the tomatoes or prune the privet before sundown.

If you're trying to 'beat the clock' you will find yourself stressed and incapable of enjoying the wonderful world of gardening. It's all about healthful relaxation and when the time you have to devote to your garden slams up against your everyday demands—that spells trouble.

Believe me you can have a garden and enjoy it too. You need not be a slave to even a large garden. When carefully designed and filled with trouble free plants you will discover the time to b-r-e-a-t-h-e in the beauty; you can let this kind of garden practically take care of itself.

Don't get me wrong, gardening can be a lot of work; there's no question about that! But most gardeners I know find the physical activity to be much better than the kind found in a closeted gymnasium or achieved during a workout with an in-home treadmill. As a gardener, not only are you becoming fit, but you're doing it with nature, in the fresh air and there are real manifestations of your achievements, too.

You get to see the results of your toil in the soil.

The key is making sure the tasks aren't overly strenuous or time consuming. Good weekend gardening can be the perfect antidote to the stress all around us in this new millennium. When you plan a low-maintenance garden you'll discover you actually have time to enjoy some old-fashioned relaxation in your weekend. Once you've created the remarkable vista we have planned for you in this book, it's important to remember, in the end, you'll be able to admire your handiwork. Whether it's sitting in a comfortable lawn chair, lying peacefully in the palm of a hammock, or spreading a checkered table cloth out in the backyard for a picnic - *your garden is your little corner of sanctuary in the*

world!

If you follow a solid plan for a low-maintenance garden you'll find the actual time needed to grow and care for it to be remarkably 'time-friendly'. If you're spending all of your Saturday and Sunday working it, only to end up exhausted, not refreshed or ready for another tough work-week ahead, then you'll have a garden like a neighbor of mine.

My Neighbor's Lost Weekend Garden

Fred used to spend every daylight hour every Saturday and Sunday, spring to fall, working in his garden. He may have been a 'weekend gardener', but he seemed to take so little pleasure in it. He appeared, dressed in his dirt laded overalls, the most unapproachable sort of fellow striving in the throes of his effort. He would scowl, his eyes peering over his glasses with perspiration beading up on his forehead, while he pushed the mower, cut the hedges, or tilled the ground.

His lawn was remarkably tidy but there was really nothing 'eye-popping' about his choice of plantings. He never seemed to actually end the process either. He had constructed a high-maintenance garden and it took all of his weekend to keep it reined in. Fred's front lawn was a small one but it was difficult to mow and care for. It slopped steeply to the street - so he had to grunt uphill while mowing, testing his willpower and straining his body. In the center of the lawn there was a 25 foot weeping willow tree, which was beautiful, but made his mowing even more difficult. The roots had broken through the ground, revealing large lumps which bulged up to challenge his mower. The limbs swept down low enough to slap my neighbor across the face again and again.

His walkway was full of Japanese hollies and cotoneasters which lined the front walkway to the front porch and driveway. Once they must have been cute and seemed like a good enough choice, but they were the wrong choice for the location. They would naturally grow tall and just when they started to cut off the path my neighbor would clip them back. More time intensive work. They required a great deal of pruning and just because he cut them back so regularly they would actually grow back larger.

In the end all of his bushes and hedges had begun to grow together, losing their individuality. Now it was holly with cotoneaster, cotoneaster with holly. It began to merge into a patchwork hedge; a comical loaf of mismatched plantings.

Fred had a large lawn bordered by a stone wall which provided him with privacy. He had a large hemlock screen on one side and trees and shrubs on the other side. He had several perennial beds, roses, along with an apple tree and a flagstone patio.

Though he had achieved his privacy, even as my direct neighbor I couldn't see him back there, but I could hear him - he did work back there alright! I could hear him slave away every weekend. Sundrops had taken over the perennials that had become so shaded that hardly anything else could vie for space. Of course, poor Fred would have to cart bag after bag of fallen leaves to the street each Fall to be picked up. You get the picture, don't you?

Not a great deal of pleasure for Fred. He never found a way to escape the prison of responsibilities and hard, never-ending work required by a high-maintenance garden.

A Better Weekend Gardening Experience

If you want to avoid Fred's fate, you need to start by making a critical examination of the maintenance of your yard and garden.

Start by taking a stroll around your property and make note of how much time you take to tend to various areas.

Which plants require the most care, right now?

Are there areas that please you and take less care?

Are there some areas that you love so much that no matter how much maintenance they take you'd not want to change them?

Can you visualize any areas being scaled down in size, or that can be improved with a low-maintenance design or gardening technique?

Where is the problem weeding area?

Which is the most difficult mowing area of your lawn?

Later in this book you will get some very specific ways to combat your problem areas as you think critically about the current maintenance problems you must take into account. Take this tour with a critical eye and a notebook. Make some notes to yourself about what you see, what you imagine, and what you are currently faced with.

As you do this preliminary overview remember it is okay to consider what you "hate" to do in regards to gardening work. We want to get rid of these areas first and foremost. Every one has a different take on this subject. Some hate mowing the lawn, others actually enjoy the exercise and like getting out in the sun. Some find weeding tedious, others will enjoy the process of grabbing weeds by the fistful and yanking them forcefully out of the ground. I have a cousin who has actually been found to wander into neighbors yards yanking the critters up (much to the surprise and cheerful appreciation of his neighbors) after he had run out of them in his own yard.

So part of your 'yard tour' is to make note of the areas that require work; how you feel about each one, and listing which are particularly time-consuming. Once you're done,

take your list and make a *check mark* (✓) next to those items that you intend to keep no matter how much maintenance they may require. Then put a *question mark* (?) next to the ones you enjoy looking at, but are nonetheless high-maintenance and take too much work. Later in this book you will discover timesaving techniques you can surely apply to many of these problem areas.

Now plan on making your aim to eliminate those areas left unmarked. You'll want low maintenance ways to turn these areas into sources of pleasure, instead of drudgery.

Weekend Gardening Goals

Now that you've taken note of the current condition of your landscape, made the notes mentioned above and found particular areas you dislike, could improve, and wouldn't want to change, you are ready to set some specific goals.

Think about your landscaping and gardening goals- how you'd like to use the gardens in your property.

Do you want to use your garden primarily to provide pesticide-free food for your family?

Are you interested in cultivating flowers?

Perhaps you wish to do both; flower gardens and vegetable gardens?

Are you intending to garden for the value it adds to your real-estate?

Or do you just like to collect certain plants?

Do you want an entertaining area as part of your back yard; perhaps a larger patio area?

Is it a swimming pool that you want to add and then landscape around?

If you're like most gardeners you'll have many different, individual goals in mind. Make another *general list* of these goals and the landscape problems you wish to correct. Some of these goals will be for personal gardening satisfaction, or perhaps just to fix eyesores you discover, or to improve your property's appearance.

Ask yourself what kind of features you'd like to have, like a formal herb garden, a wildflower region, a strawberry patch. This kind of list doesn't require a 'yard tour', either.

This is your *wish list*, the dreams you have that you've always wanted to see realized. Perhaps it might look like this one:

MY LIST

Redo overgrown foundation planting.
Clean up the weedy back hill.
Get the deep dip in the backyard section near the water well.
Take out the bushes around the wall in front of the house.
Remove overgrown junipers along the driveway.
Get rid of the thin lawn areas beneath certain trees.
Beautify with plant containers near the front door.
Create more privacy.
Camouflage the tool shed using vines or shrubbery.

Making Your Choices

Once you have your lists of goals and wishes you can begin to really plan. You may have to make some hard choices. *Be realistic*. You might wish to have a flowing water garden with imbedded tubes that push flowing colored streams rolling about sparkling river stones through the immaculate Japanese flower beds you envision; but is that really possible?

Just don't let the 'rational' thinker in you destroy your hidden dreams, either. Make some happy compromises and let your imagination run free, too. If you dream particularly large, that's fine. You may want to leave these on a long term list for future consideration. Building that Victorian cottage garden like famous British garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, may be possible a year or two down the road - who knows?

Take your dreams, your goals list, all the notes you've made up until now and put them in *order*.

The order of your goals becomes important in helping you determine the size and effort in any particular gardening area. Remember, you only have a limited amount of time to develop your dreams, you want to invest the most effort in maintaining those areas that hold the most interest to you - first.

For instance, a perennial border in red, white and blue might more realistically be a simpler perennial border. Likewise:

A full-blown wildflower garden becomes a more realistic shade garden

An herb garden with brick paths and a sundial becomes a more realistic rock garden and culinary herb garden

A vegetable garden; to a salad garden

A collection of flowering tress; a berry garden.

Looking For Easy Solutions

Great weekend gardeners don't necessarily grow fewer shrubs, flowers and vegetables than other gardeners; nor are their properties necessarily smaller. However, they do have a knack for growing plants that can care for themselves. *This is key to becoming a successful gardener, weekends or otherwise.* Choosing these easier plants for the right place is equally important. Organizing your garden so that high maintenance areas are concentrated together reduce your garden chores considerably, as well.

Like most things in life, once someone shows us the "how to", we learn there is truly 'a better way.' I'd like to give you some sound advice that does just that before we get to the nitty gritty of building your beautiful backyard garden.

Slow But Sure Does It!

First, let's realize that taking on the enterprise of gardening should be done slowly.

That's truly the most valuable, cautionary word I can proffer to you. Being ambitious is fine, but being *overly ambitious* will cause you to require too much of yourself in any one given season. Trying to renovate your entire property all at once may cause you to not complete anything.

If you attempt too much at once, you actually may be creating worse problems; the exact opposite of what a successful weekend gardener needs! I know one such example of this overblown enthusiasm getting in the way of a concrete, well paced plan. In a desire to attack his yard with a vengeance my cousin (yes, the inveterate weed puller) hired a professional tree care company to yank out most of his offending trees and overgrown brush. They also cut down dying, deceased, and unwanted trees, such as mimosa, and turned them into wood chips, which he would use for mulch. He went full-steam ahead on the weeding too.

In the end he had a property that seemed to scream for landscaping. Clear ground that, by the time he had gotten rid of most of the offending plants, found that it was too late in the season to do much planting. He also didn't have the energy or budget to replant the cleared areas. Weeds started reappearing in places where he didn't spread mulch and he

ended up realizing he had really made matters worse by his ill-placed and overblown enthusiasm.

Next, please do the obvious. The real key to easy-care landscaping is to begin with plants that are suited to your climate and to the particular exposure, soil, moisture, and other conditions in which you are planning to grow them. These are what I like to call “happy” plants. They grow better because they find their environment ideally suited to them. You’ll be happier too, because you have fewer problems with them.

Plants, in addition to needing the proper temperature quotient, also remain healthy when they receive the proper rainfall in their natural temperate zone. Going ‘native’ in the garden is a good idea. Creating a garden ecosystem together with plants that are in their natural environment makes total sense. Yet, it has been told that native North Easterners will move to the Southwest where the average rainfall can be as little as two inches or under in the desert regions and fill their gardens with water-loving plants that they should have left at the old homestead.

Plants grow naturally in many different habitats— deserts, swamps, bogs, woods, meadows, and rocky screes. Perennial borders, foundation plantings, and open lawns hardly duplicate such natural settings and many times offer plants far from their own ideal. Therefore, natural *settings* should be considered as well as native plants when constructing your ideal garden.

Weekender's Quick Tip

Problem: Formal hedges require time-consuming shearing several times a year or they look very unattractive.

Quick Fix: Transform formal hedges into informally pruned hedges, which have a natural shape and require much less attention. Be patient, the complete make-over may take several years of corrective pruning.

It is important to scale down your wish list to keep high-maintenance areas small scale. Instead of planting an orchard, plant a row of low-maintenance blueberries. Rather than planting a large formal garden of herbs, which would require a lot of preparation and tending, why not compromise? Confine particular herbs you really want in clay planters.

Another way to scale down the scope of your gardening is to reduce the amount of your property that you will actively cultivate. Keeping your garden on a smaller scale conserves water and reduces tending and maintenance. Remember an open area can often give fine relief to a more ornate fully landscaped section of your yard. Don’t feel like every given inch of property must be developed.

You’ve accomplished a great deal by following the step-by-step outline introduced here in the first chapter. You can now say you have truly taken ‘new eyes’ to your property and given some serious thought to how you wish to proceed. When I did the same project I used up a whole weekend just making notes, re-visiting the property a second and third time, refining that list, dreaming and imagining what I’d love to see out there and making my notes.

It was time well invested!

Though you may wish to scan through the rest of this book to find the problem areas, or as I'd prefer to say, the most 'exciting' areas that match your particular set of goals and plans; I'll start the next chapter with a look at the single largest piece of landscaping in any yard. The Lawn.

Chapter 2: Easy Lawns



The typical suburban lawn, like the one my neighbor Fred had to struggle with, provides little satisfaction. Any expansive lawn and its maintenance can easily turn into just another monotonous chore. I could see Fred, trying to keep his lawn an emerald green, the hedges and shrubs neatly pruned, and the fallen leaves all raked and bagged for collection and thought: “that must get pretty old - pretty fast”.

Let’s make your lawn an easier, more enjoyable lawn by employing low-maintenance ground covers, shrubs and trees. The funny thing about what you will discover in this chapter is that, surprisingly, this easy lawn will most likely far outshine your old one in appearance, too!

A New Vision Of Lawn Care

Lawn maintenance consumes more gardening time than just about any other garden chore. They must be mowed, weeded, watered, fertilized, limed, dethatched, re-seeded, edged, and raked of debris including leaves. Add the fact that these chores must be performed at critical times in the lawns’ seasonal cycle and you get a pretty rough picture of just how daunting this lawn business can be.

One of the best ideas I can give you is to actually reduce the amount of space taken up by lawn. Flower and herb gardens, shrubbery borders, and expanses of decorative lawn covers can replace much of this large, task intensive lawn area,— especially those difficult to mow areas.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying lawn areas are bad! Heaven forbid! A well-kept expanse of lawn delights the eye and sets off your other landscaping. It is restful and it integrates. Bolder textures of foliage are offset by a fine lawn and can save you from having a garden area that is too ‘busy’ or overpowering.

Furthermore, no plant can replace the fine-textured lawn. No other groundcover is as good as simple lawn grass.

The shape of the lawn area also plays a large role in the garden’s design. Does it curve? Square-oriented? Elongated? Round? Whichever yours is, realize it plays a crucial role in directing the eye and can add special design qualities to the final appearance you intend. Nice to know, as well, that lawns have never been known to block any views!

Here’s something to consider as you prepare your weekends around this vital landscaping area: Don’t assume that the lawn is the *automatic answer* to filling up leftover yard space. Do just the reverse - plan the lawn shape and then plant around it!

The nice thing about lawns (and there are so many) is that it is a relatively low-cost form to other alternatives like mass plantings of groundcover plants or installing extensive decking or a brick or stone patio.

Sloping Lawns

Sloping lawns, with their steep dips can make maintenance difficult. The mowing can be treacherous, physically challenging and very time-consuming.

One solution is to remove the lawn on a steep slope and plant the area with shrubs, ground covers, or both; plants that bind the soil with creeping roots are best where the grade is particularly steep. Plants that trail, weep, or arch look stunning as they gently caress the slope. English ivy is an excellent choice, usually.

Low spreading shrubs like cotoneasters, or junipers also look attractive and provide a low-maintenance solution to slopes.

It's important to prevent erosion on slopes until your ground cover establishes itself. Rather than stripping away the sod, which could be tricky on a steep slope, you might want to kill it instead, leaving the dead plants in place. Herbicides are made for this chore but more eco-sensitive gardeners can place a black plastic weighted down with rocks, or use a thick layer of wood chips to accomplish the same thing.

What About Lawn in Shade?

Why try to grow a lawn where it simply doesn't want to grow?

In shady areas, especially the north side of buildings or under trees, grass often struggles to fill in and look beautiful for you. But the same sites that are bad for your lawn can be excellent for shade loving ground cover or a garden of shrubs, perennials, or wild flowers. These grow very well in the shade. Try planting these plants:

Dwarf rhododendrons

Should I remove my grass entirely?

It's best to remove grassy lawn areas entirely in the following situations:

Where surface roots interfere with mowing

Where low-hanging trees or shrub branches interfere with the mower or require 'stooping'

Where the ground slopes so much that moving the mower is difficult

Where many specimen trees and shrubs grow in the lawn, making for extra work and time to trim around the trunks

Under or bordering a fence

Where access is difficult

Ferns

Hostas

Creeping flox

Dwarf Chinese astilbes

These recommendations grow all year long, look pretty and require very little care.

If you want the open feeling of the lawn replace parts of it with groundcover that grows no more than about 6-8 inches tall. Or get creative and replace areas with more exciting choices like perennial flower border, a shrub bed, a meadow or if you live in a 'sturdy' area try a wildflower garden.

In arid areas stones and pebbles can make an attractive *hardscape*- or a non plant area. In townhouses, and condominium garden areas these forms of patio coverings can really dominate smaller landscapes very effectively.

**Keep this in Mind
& You Can't Go Wrong!**

Reducing the size of the lawn, rather than totally eliminating it, often makes sense, especially if your property is large.

Remember, think of the lawn as playing an important landscape role in your design, not as occupying whatever space happens to remain after installing perennials and shrub borders.

Make the lawn only big enough to hold your landscape together and you can't go wrong!

Let's Line up Our Lawn

Let's mark the contours of our lawn to clearly move toward a reduced lawn shape. Use a clothesline, string or a garden hose to outline it and study the size and shape to see how it balances with the rest of the garden area before you make any final decisions.

The usual choice is to bring in the edges of the lawn, planting the perimeter, but this may create a more closed in feeling, especially with shrubs planted around the edges. An alternative is to create islands within the lawn and plant those with whatever you wish. If there are trees already there, it makes sense to arrange the islands around them.

For an open feeling, plant the bed with low flowers and/or evergreen ground covers. A more wooded look would include flowering shrubs within the island and blanket the ground with mulch or ground covers.

By creating several of these island beds, the remaining grass acts as an alluring path or corridor meandering through the beds. With wide paths and an open planting, the feeling

will be 'open', spacious and more formal; with narrower paths and taller plantings, the feeling will be of a woodland.

Another alternative is to turn part of the lawn into a field of colorful flowers. A meadow garden of this type is less work than a lawn, but it isn't as easy and carefree as is often thought, or written about in those magazine articles. The meadow can't be started by simply scattering wild-flower seeds on the lawn. Like any garden it takes some tending.

Mass Planting Ground Covers

You're getting the idea by now aren't you fellow gardener? We are finding delightful ways to lessen the work load that a lawn presents us with. By choosing some of these alternatives you greatly enhance your esthetic view and considerably reduce the painstaking care that wrings hours out of your weekend.

Another way to accomplish this is to 'go for ground covers'.

Lawns can be totally replaced or reduced in size in many landscapes by mass-planting ground covers. When planted in quantity, in great swirls beneath shrubs and trees, a groundcover adds texture and interest without overpowering the more dominant plants and serves as a backdrop for the changing flowers and foliage in your garden paradise.

The term ground cover applies to many kinds of plants. Most are nonwoody plants. Some, like periwinkle are evergreen, while others, such as leadwort are deciduous and lose their foliage in winter. Some ground covers such as sweet woodruff, die back to the ground, disappearing after the growing season. You can use rock cotoneaster which are leafless in winter but provide an interesting branch structure all year. Other choices include creeping juniper, that are evergreen. Some are less than an inch in height such as wooly thyme and others grow to several feet like gardeners garters.

One thing all ground covers are capable of doing is spreading horizontally to blanket the ground. They are often vining or creeping plants or spread rapidly by underground roots or stems. Though turf grasses meet the definition of a ground cover, usually the term is used to mean alternatives to turf grass.

Advantages Of Using Ground Covers in Place Of Lawns:

Once filled in, the ground cover crowds out most weeds.

Fallen tree leaves usually require little or no removal since they sift to the ground through the ground cover and act like a natural mulch.

Once established, the ground cover requires only occasional maintenance, if any.

Ground Cover As A Happy Compromise

You must reach a happy compromise when choosing a ground cover for your low-maintenance landscape by reminding yourself that nothing's perfect. The best ground covers spread rapidly and shade out weeds, or they wouldn't be desirable for your goal of an easier gardening experience. These ground covers need discipline to stay put. Beat them back from time to time and show them who's boss!

Regardless of how strict you need to be here it's surely better than dealing with more lawn.

Mowing a lawn where trees and shrubs are planted in an island formation is easier than mowing around trees and shrubs in an open lawn landscape, because bumpy roots and overhanging branches don't become obstacles to your mowing.

You also won't risk injuring those trunks with the mower.

- 1 Most ground covers are very attractive landscape plants in their own right; they can add beautiful foliage, and texture to your backyard vista.

My Big Three Suggestions!

In an effort to simplify and add more delight to your weekend gardening, I've decided to go out on a limb and flat-out tell you the three best, all-around ground covers that you can employ for excellent 'care-free' results.

All three are probably the most common and taken together, they are probably planted more often than all other ground covers combined. Some garden writers and magazine publishers don't give them enough credit saying they are boring. But I disagree. I think they are rabidly popular because they work - and they work *for you*, not against you!

Three plants - pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*), English Ivy (*Hedra helix*), and periwinkle (*Vinca minor* and *Vinca major*).

One of the benefits these choices offer is expense. They are relatively cheap compared to most other choices, they fill in quickly and provide a tantalizing carpet of dark green foliage throughout the year. The larger your yard area the more you will appreciate the (relatively) inexpensive three mentioned above. Other ground covers might tempt you but these three will save you money and provide all you need for fine coverage.

Of the three, **periwinkle**, with its tidy leaves and small blue flowers, is by far my personal choice, and if it weren't so common I'm sure most gardeners would agree. I've

used it over large sweeps of land and to trail over walls, sprinkling more attention grabbing plants throughout.

Pachysandra provides you with whirls of green foliage and short peaks of creamy white flowers.

The English ivy, with its dark green three pointed leaves will give you a sturdy and lively look.

Just remember, the pachysandra grows much taller than periwinkle, up to 8 to 10 inches, and English ivy can be a bit testy, even a pest sometimes if not regularly trimmed back—both establish themselves faster than the periwinkle.

Oh! The Tangled Webs Of Deceitful Ground Cover!

It's a real shock to find that so many ground covers are plants that are listed as such AND as weeds in popular gardening publications. Ironically, the very qualities that make ground covers so desirable can make them a menace to Weekender's, like us. Ground covers are meant to spread— but some of the best spreaders are just too 'slap happy' to spread, if you get my meaning. They literally swamp areas of lawn. Be very cautious when buying ground cover that you know little about; you may be paying a high price for a real pest.

It's fine to look through catalogs for other forms of ground cover, in fact, my 'Big Three' barely scratches the surface as to what's available on the market, but do your research and watch your pocketbook. These other forms may well be suited to your needs, but my purpose in writing this book is to simplify your chores, while making your lawn beautiful.

Handling Unruly Ground Covers

If you properly situate your ground cover in the soil with the light conditions it prefers, it will always spread out pretty nicely. However even the best, like sweet woodruff, often have to be controlled. The worst (see my avoid at all costs list above) like Hall's honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica* 'Halliana') are almost as easy to stop as a racing locomotive, becoming an out and out pest. Others can be controlled if you just remain diligent.

One of the best 'helps' in controlling any ground cover spread is with an 'edger'. The edge can be landscape timbers, or vinyl lawn borders that are sunk into the ground,

Some Ground Covers To Avoid

The list below highlights difficult to keep ground covers that can turn into hard to get rid of weeds and are a sure-fire way to extend your weekend's precious gardening time. *Avoid them at all costs:*

Goutweed, or Bishops Weed

dwarf bamboo

crown vetch

dichondra

mock strawberry, Indian strawberry

ground ivy

Hall's Japanese honeysuckle

moneywort, creeping Jennie

Virginia creeper

ribbon grass

Japanese knotweed, Mexican bamboo

creeping buttercup

wooly speedwell

violets

keeping your ground covers from trying to make their little trip into stellar space where it doesn't belong.

Vining type ground covers can't be stopped so easily by using an edge. They'll gladly step right over it. An occasional clipping works with these, others may need more attention. I just keep my English Ivy and Periwinkle in order by simply clipping their tips with my lawn mower when doing the lawn— see how easy that is?

Mowing And Lawn Care Freedom

You've done a lot so far haven't you? You've actually planned, chosen ground cover, placed it where it belongs, and in the process cut down the expanse of lawn needing to be mowed.

Wonderful!

You're solidly ahead of the unhappy Weekend Gardeners like my past neighbor, Fred. Now let's look at ways to make the actual mowing easier. Even if you own one of those turbo charged 'sit-down' mowers, or like me, push the infernal 'manual' kind that never seem to have the radius of cut you wish for, these ideas will greatly enhance the 'enjoyment' of your lawn trimming and care experience.

First, as you do your planning (from Chapter 1) please try and get rid of those back breaking curves and sharp angles that you need to mow around. Make your lawn outline straight or gently curved. A right angle may be dramatic— but it's you that must cut around it every week or ten days.

Wherever, you find branches, or limbs that are just waiting to attack you, scratch your arms, poke out your eye, or simply impede your smooth mowing (as you grunt by them) make a decision in your early planning to either get rid of the limbs or replace the grass with ground cover. Preferably the latter.

Grass Choices

If you're like me, you haven't a got a hound's tooth of an idea what kind of grass your current lawn is covered with. I don't know about you but the lawn - along with the wall to wall carpeting in my house - came with the property when I bought it.

It helps to know the kind of lawn you have so you can care for it properly, but if you don't and your lawn is growing happily, looks lush enough, pleases you overall - then , as Alfred E. Neuman once said, "What? Me worry?"

However, if you're struggling to grow your lawn, it may be you have the wrong grass for your situation. There are tons of lawn species. They all differ in climate preference, light and moisture requirements too.

Most lawns are a mixture of grass types. It's survival of the fittest here; the most hardy just outlive and eventually replace the less hardy or well adapted.

If you're starting a new lawn, take the time to install a well adapted, disease resistant variety. You want something that fights off weeds easily, requires less frequent mowing and will stay green with less fertilizer and water.

In general, cool season grasses are grown in the North (colder climates). These grow best and are greenest during the cool months of spring and early summer and won't brown out in late summer unless you refuse to give them water. In the South (warmer climates) warm season grasses are usually abound. These may turn brown in the winter but remain green during the hot summer months.

Overall, in choosing your new lawn remember that climactic factors such as the degree of humidity, amount of rainfall, and the extent of cold and heat, as well as the type and condition of soil, vary throughout the country. These factors influence which types of lawn grass do well, and where. I suggest you contact your local Horticultural Society for input and feedback before making a final choice.

Shaded Grass

Grass loves the sun. It needs it to do its miraculous photosynthesizing— and to remain green. In the shade grass can struggle. If you are dead set on having grass in a shady area of your landscape plan, rather than ground cover or a shade garden, then you should re-seed with a shade tolerant mixture.

In general, St. Augustine-grass, bentgrass, and to a lesser extent Kentucky blue grass and perennial ryegrass will work.

Helping Grass In The Shade

Modify your cultivating practices to help shaded grass so they grow better by:

Being sure the area gets good air circulation to discourage fungal diseases, which flourish in the shade

Mow the lawn ½ to 1 inch higher than recommended for your mixture, so the grass retains enough leaf for photosynthesizing in low light

Increase the fertilizer by one-half if the lawn is growing under a tree

The shaded lawn may need extra water if tree roots compete for water

Now wouldn't it just be easier to plant ground covers or a shade garden?

Plant breeders have brought us cultivars of great species that are exceptionally tolerant of low light. For instance, Kentucky bluegrass cultivars include: 'A-34', 'Benson', 'Bristol', 'Glade' and 'Nugget'.

Again your local horticultural society, or garden club will be glad to discuss these different approaches if you wish to get 'fancy' with your lawn grasses.

Grass Vs. Tree Trunks & Roots

I've never been able to simply run my lawn mower over grass that is situated close to a tree trunk or root system that is bulging out of the ground and then move on. Invariably I have to go back and hand trim these persistent blades of grass. That's something that can turn a quick mow into a tedious, time consuming event that eats away at my weekend.

Roots of some trees grow just under the surface, forming lumps in the lawn that make mowing an unhappy affair. When the roots actually break through the ground, they can be awfully mean to my mower, and they both lose; the mower and the tree with that encounter.

What's a carefree Weekend Gardener to do?

I planted a groundcover beneath the tree. Creating a bed of pachysandra beneath the branches which quickly eliminated the problem. Many other shade tolerant ground covers like periwinkle and English Ivy work well as does dead nettle and bugleweed.

For best results make the bed large enough to visually anchor the tree. I've seen wonderful examples of the ground cover actually spreading out to form a ring out to the tree's canopy and beyond it. The ground cover actually balances the scale of the tree. Very nice effect.

A Mowing Strip To The Rescue!

Wherever you find a raised bed, a wall, or a raised edging, mowing becomes difficult. A mowing strip can be like a knight in shining armor here. A mowing strip is an edging that is low enough and solid enough to for the mower's wheels to run along it. Landscape timbers used as an edging can double as a mowing strip.

Bricks work well too. As long as you set them flush with the ground. If you want to double the bricks as a lawn holding edge they need to be set on end or sideways, not flat, or they won't be deep enough to stop creeping grass roots.

Ultimately, weeds and grass have many sneaky ways of getting into spaces between bricks. To help reduce this stagger them and butt them closely together or lay them over a piece of landscape fabric, which is permeable to water and air but not weed roots.

Professional landscapers often use steel edging to edge borders. That's expensive stuff.

You can purchase many kinds of edging strips at well-stocked garden centers. It's easy to install steel, aluminum (though I don't like the aesthetics of aluminum) or vinyl edging. Use a flat garden spade to cut along the edge of your bed, creating a straight sided trough a little deeper than the width of the edging. Lay the edging flat against the outer side of the trough with the rounded edge protruding just above the soil line. Backfill with soil and firm it up with your hands or feet. Simple,— but what a time saver!

Conclusion: Easy Lawns!

I hope you've found the tips and tricks in this chapter helpful in cutting down on your biggest weekly chore in your beautiful Weekenders' Backyard Garden—the lawn.

Overall the single best advice I gave earlier stands in good stead. Wherever possible cut down the lawn area, but do so without sacrificing the esthetic beauty of the lawn itself. Use it to guide the eye to other areas of interest. Let it be your first consideration in design.

Remember too, you can add walkways, patios, decks, shrubs, hedges and other trees to enhance your lawn expanse. All of these help tame your workload and beautify your surroundings.

By carefully planning your grassy lawn you will save yourself countless hours of struggle and maintenance. Be inventive and creative but keep in mind how serious lawn design is to your desire to kick your feet back, lounge in that hammock and sip some nice iced tea!

Weekender's Quick Tip

Problem: A large lawn takes too much time to care for it.

Quick Fix: Replace some or all of the lawn with low-growing groundcover, or install a patio or deck.

Now that you've placed a stunning expanse of low-maintenance lawn in place it's time to decorate your backyard escape. How about a nice flower garden out there?

Chapter 3: Fast Flowers



Dear Weekend Gardener, don't expect that this chapter explains how to *grow* flowers and flower beds faster! They will grow just as Nature decides and not a second quicker.

By fast, I simply mean *care-free* flower beds— beds that don't take a lot of work. If you're looking for packs of vivid blossoms from early spring through fall this chapter will show you the short cuts, quick tips and easier ways to accomplish this goal.

Your flower beds, like everything you find in this book should be low-maintenance. If you set up flower beds that need little pampering they take care of themselves. Perennials, shrubs, and bulbs that are specially selected to thrive in their sites; drought resistant flowers that grow in the dry sandy soil where it may be difficult to get a water hose to them; shade loving flowers and ferns to decorate borders beneath trees. We'll discover disease and bug resistant flowers that don't require stalking or dividing, but will instead, return next spring and summer with wonderful blossoms.

All you need to do to keep this kind of flower plan going is:

Pinch off the faded flowers of the spring bulbs

Water the flowers in case of summer or fall drought

Cut the perennials to the ground in the winter once the tops have turned dry and brown

That's it!

We're going to leave our fast flower beds heavily mulched with a deep layer of shredded leaves to reduce watering and weeding chores, and some lawn edging will confine each planting area so there will be no need to consistently fight off the grass from invading flowers.

The Perfect Weekend Flower Garden

Since many herbaceous perennials and bulbs live for years and form ever larger clumps, a garden that relies on a careful selection of these hardy and long lasting flowers guarantees low-maintenance. If you match your flowers selections to the soil and sun conditions you experience in your climate zone you can rest happy with this approach.

In this chapter I'm going to list some easy care choices and some easy care bulbs. Then I'll list the same in perennials and bulbs to avoid. Use them in making your selections and you can't go wrong.

As you proceed with your choices remember that adding spring bulbs to the perennial garden involves the risk that the later in the growing season, as they disappear from site,

you will have inadvertently sliced into the dormant bulbs when dividing a perennial or adding something new to the bed. Avoid this at all costs! In the fall, you might even try to plant more bulbs where bulbs are already located. Don't laugh! This happens more often than any of us would like to admit. Try to plant more bulbs in their own designated spaces in the garden— don't mix them in between the perennials— and then as the bulb flowers have faded or their foliage begins to look a bit downcast, plant shallow-rooted annuals right on top of them. By alternating like this, you'll get a long display of vibrant color and have a marker that tells you where the bulbs lie dormant.

Flowers: A Short Course

Let the fun begin! Before you take on the joyful planting of a delightful flower bed arrangement in your backyard paradise, it will help to understand the basic habits and living patterns of the plants you will be growing— flowering annuals, biennials, perennials, and bulbs, with some evergreen and flowering shrubs.

If you are already a seasoned gardener this may appear old hat to you, but this book is for beginners too and it's very important to understand different types of plants available to you when planning the flower garden with the goal in mind; low maintenance, blossoms from spring through fall - if you please.

Easy care flower gardens depend on three major types of choices. The herbaceous perennials, bulbs, and some flowering shrubs for color. All of these return year after year. That's a real time saver for you!

Flowering annuals require much more care and are not 'time friendly'. But there are some that bloom with little care, nonstop, and others will self-sow and become a permanent addition to your garden— sometimes, whether you want them to or not— so careful selection of these annuals is important to a beautiful garden as well.

Three Cheers For Annuals!



Gardeners love annuals because they bloom so fully, and the color is what makes everyone you know stop and wonder, then break into open applause. A nice feeling for all gardeners - weekend and otherwise. The essence of an annual is that it germinates from a seed, growing into a mature plant that flowers, then sets its seed and finally dies. All this happens in a single growing season.

By removing the fading flowers once they have faded - a chore called deadheading - you can prevent seed formation and the bulbs will just keep flowering. But deadheading is a time consuming task and require six or eight sets of hands scurrying through a large flowering annual bed just to keep up.

Annuals are native to all kinds of climates, from alpine meadows, to low deserts, and some species have preferred weather conditions within these climates, as well. Some are cool-season annuals, favoring spring and fall conditions. Others are warm weather annuals, most hearty in summer heat

For this reason horticulturists have divided annuals into three distinct categories:

Tender annuals

Hardy annuals

Half-Hardy annuals

Many seed catalogs code their annuals with these distinctions which can guide you in selection.

Most **tender annuals** like *marigolds* and *zinnias*, hail from regions where summers are hot and winters are mild, even frost free. Cool season tender annuals may need some shade in the South and Southwest, but may still die out when temperatures soar. Usually, tender annuals need a long growing period before they flower. Place them in soil that has fully warmed up, but don't expect instant flowers; it may be August before you see them.

The best way to go, if you're intent on seeding with tender annuals is to begin inside your home in late winter and wait until they are large enough to transplant outdoors in the spring after all frost dangers have passed. The easiest (though a bit more expensive) solution is to simply buy the bedding plants at your garden center in late spring. I do this and find the plants are much healthier and usually already have achieved some blooms.

Cool tolerant **hardy annuals** can withstand some light frost in the spring and fall. In many climates, their seeds will remain through the winter if you plant in the fall, or if they self sow in your garden, they'll germinate early enough to provide good floral decoration beginning in spring or early summer. Here you can purchase young transplants too.

In this category I love *Bachelors button*, a lovely blue flower that is a hardy annual because it defies frost into the fall each year. Another favorite is *love-in-a mist*, this needle like foliage has circular

Easy Care Annuals

You don't need time consuming dead-heading for these annuals to prosper.
Each of these requires little attention, too!

Begonia (wax begonia)

Browallia speciosa (browallia)

Catharanthus roseus (Madagascar periwinkle)

Celosia cristata (cockscomb)

Cleome hassleriana (cleome, spider flower)

Impatiens wallerana (impatiens, busy Lizzie)

Lobelia erinus (edging lobelia)

Lobularia maritima (sweet alyssum)

Myosotis sylvatica (forget-me-not)

Sanvitalia procumbens (creeping zinnia)

lavender blue, pink or white flowers and it easily re-seeds.

Neither tender nor hardy, **half-hardy annuals** tolerate periods of cold in spring and fall, but any frost will cut their lovely lives short. If you sow seed rather than purchase bedding plants, it's usually best to sow them outdoors after all threat of frost has passed. Here warm soil is not necessary.

Two of my favorites in this class of half hardy annuals are *cosmos*, with its satiny pink, wine red, or white daisy like flowers, and the *lacy spiderflower*, which produces large, wispy heads of pale pink, rose, purple or white blossoms.

Now that we've decided on some lovely annuals for our weekend excursions into the backyard of our dreams we'll take a quick look at those favorite garden flowers: the Biennials.

Those Bang-Up Biennials!



Biennials, like fox-glove, sweet William and forget-me-nots, live only two years. With this two season life span, biennials get themselves growing during the first season, but don't flower or set seed until the second. Instead of dying back in the fall, they form a rosette of leaves that hug the ground all winter. Once they do set seed they usually die (some modern hybrids may live on, however) and you can help them along by scattering the ripe seed where you'd like them to grow.

Just wait until the flower stalks dry on the stem, and in mid to late summer, shake the seeds onto the ground.

Some seeds may not germinate until the spring after the seed is set; these won't flower either, until the following year. Some other nice varieties of this type are: Canterbury bells, honesty, Iceland poppy and garden mulleins.

Keep 'Em Comin' Perennials

Here's the mother lode for weekend gardeners like you and me.

Perennials offer us an easy and reliable source of flowers year after year, and demand very little effort from the 'time-strapped' lover of nature. They are hardy, their tops die down to the ground during winter, but their roots remain alive and send up new beauty in the spring.

I still love the time when their foliage first peeks out of the ground in early spring - all is well with the world again and I haven't had to do a thing. It's like Mother Nature



reminding me she can make such wonderful little miracles without my sweaty brow and strained effort. In fact, two types of perennial I particularly enjoy are bleeding heart and lung wort which undergo such remarkable growth spurts you can almost watch them grow every warm spring day.

Another nice feature is that perennials spread their clumps increasing in size each year. So every few years you will have to dig them up and divide them again but this is a wonderful source of 'free' plants for the rest of your garden should you decide to use them. Many grow for over 10 years without you needing to divide them— ideal for weekend dirt throwers—and peonies and poppies can go 50 years! My, that is a lifetime of pleasure and low-maintenance.

Woody perennials do not die to the ground in winter, though some do become dormant. Their stems and branches are permanent so these are large growing plants - shrubs trees and vines. Some, like heaths, heathers and roses find the flower garden a suitable place to hang out.

Perennials You'll Save Time With!

These deep rooted perennials will stay where you put them and grow larger and sturdier every year. Time savers because they don't require dividing and rarely invade their neighbors.

Achillea filipendulina (fernleaf yarrow) Zone 3
Aconitum napellus (common monkshood) Zone 3
Amsonia tabernaemontana (blue star) Zone 3
Anemone sylvestris (snowdrop anemone) Zone 4
Dicentra spectabilis (bleeding heart) Zone 2
Paeonia lactiflora (peony) Zone 2
Rudbeckia fulgida "Goldstrum" (Goldstrum Black-eyed Susan) Zone 3

Bang Up Bulbs!

Right up there with perennials are those magnificent bulbs! They also are ideal for the ‘time squeezed’ weekend gardener. They are low-maintenance and will return year after year, blooming beautifully with very little care.

Early bulbs like *crocuses*, *snowdrops* and *glory-of-the-snow* make you happy in late winter and very early spring. Bulbs come up, usually, well before perennials even start to wake up and one of the joys of each spring, for me, is seeing these come to life as if Mother Nature were reminding me she is quite capable of delivering joy to the world without any effort on my part.

The bulb remains dormant much of the year, usually presenting foliage and flowers for only a few months. Dying bulbs can be somewhat unattractive, but don’t remove them until they are turned yellow or the bulb won’t be able to store enough nourishment for the next growth cycle. If you carefully design your flower beds you can disguise, and draw attention away from these dying bulbs.



Bulbs, like annuals and perennials, can be tender or hardy. You will only make for extra work if you plant tender bulbs in a colder climate. Instead, make sure you make choices that match the best climate zone for your bulbs. Where bulbs find the climate to their liking, many, including daffodils, grape hyacinths, and crocuses will spread over the years into great clumps and drifts. You can leave them alone or divide and separate them to plant elsewhere. This offers you a great source of ‘free’ plants each year, too!

Roses, Oh! Roses

I’ve got to tell you, fellow weekender, this is the most thorny issue of all! No pun intended, but if you have to have roses in your weekend garden, then God bless you. Of the hundreds of flowers that you could plant in your flower garden, none are more beloved or *demanding* than roses. They inspire poets and lovers, but these woody plants require so much care that I’d like to tell you—“forget it!”



Some Easy Care Bulbs

Here are some vigorous bulbs that will increase each year but never become weedy:

Agapanthus spp. (Lily-of-the-Nile) Zone 9

Anemone blanda (windflower) Zone 5

Chionodoxa spp. (Glory-of-the-snow) Zone 4

Colchicum autumnale (autumn crocus) Zone 5

Crocus spp. And hybrids (crocuses) Zone 5

Fritillaria melagris (checkered lily) Zone 4

Galanthus elwesii (giant snowdrop) Zone 4

G. nivalis (common snowdrop) Zone 4

Hyacinthoides hispanicus (Spanish bluebell) Zone 4

Iris danfordiae Zone 5

Muscari spp. (Grape hyacinths) Zone 2-4

Narcissus spp and hybrids (daffodils, jonquils and narcissi) Zones 4-6

Sternbergia lutea (winter daffodil, lily-of-the-field) Zone 7

But you are probably the kind of gardener that just can't imagine a flower garden without this magnificent, specialized delight. Let me just say this: avoid the temperamental modern roses—though their blossoms are heavenly, they will continually disappoint you.

Let's look at one kind of rose you can work with if you must— shrub roses. These are a species or old time hybrids that you can work with on weekends, — if you insist. There is 'Bonica', 'Ferdy' 'White Meidiland', and 'Scarlet Meidiland' which spread along the ground to make flowering groundcover and effective specimens in a flowering bed or can be grown as a flowering hedge.

Before I tell you more about these wonderful roses, how difficult they are in terms of climactic and locale, I'll tell you a story:

My mother, from whom I've learned all my gardening techniques, had worked long and hard with roses here in New England (a northern climate) and once had her mother, my grandmother visit. Grandma Bonnie was from Georgia— a great southern locale that could grow roses in a completely different climate than up north.

She felt it was customary to cut these rose bushes back, deeply back - to make them grow fully. This is one of the great memories I have as a child as my mother came home one day to see her delicate, highly difficult rose bushes desiccated by this action. How my mother ever forgave my dear 'Granny Bonnie' I'll never know! It must have been love.

Roses in particular climates react so very differently than any other plant I can think of. They are so delicate by nature that what works in one locale, will absolutely not work in another.

Now I must say a couple of things here. These shrub roses I mentioned are really the only alternative for northern climates. They bloom repeatedly, forming new branches and producing more blossoms— even if you don't cut off the faded blossoms (deadhead), as is necessary with "modern" roses.

The second is that roses are so marvelously intricate that, as a weekender, I suggest you leave them for the end of your flowering garden planning— as a last experiment at adding beauty and joy to your garden. Believe me, they are like dating a debutante or a rich prince— entirely too much attention is required to make your beginning romance with a flower garden worthwhile.

The Season Long Bloom

In general, perennials, those every day plants you must use as a weekender, create less of a show than the more demanding annuals, and so much less than the prima donna roses. Most blooms are about two weeks a year during a specified season, yet some perennials may bloom as long as 4-6 weeks. That's flowering you can enjoy!

If you mix annuals with your flowering perennials, the scenario is excellent. Come early spring, all you have to do is pull the protective mulch back from the perennial, clean leftover litter and leaves - and you're set!

Use annuals to perk up your flower garden but depend on perennials to be your mainstay. This gives you a season long blooming with little effort. The annuals provide much color and the perennials fill in the foliage to make your garden a true delight with low-maintenance.

Going With Mail Order Perennials

Weekend gardeners who would rather spend their precious weekends with their hands in the dirt instead of shopping will find mail order perennials a God Send!

Pick a color scheme, choose a catalog and compare prices. Order the exact plants needed and do it on a bleak January day when you don't have a single demand from your garden outside. You'll save money (compared to your local nursery) - but just remember they may be smaller and perhaps won't blossom the first year. But the easy part of perennials is that once they do get going - they stay going.

Color In The Flower

Garden

Being creative with color is what making a flower garden is all about. Making a stunning color theme is a challenge. Try to select neighboring plants whose flower colors complement each other if they bloom at the same times and overlap. For instance, try to overlap white flowers, such as meadow phlox or Shasta daisy with silvery gray foliage plants like "Silver Mound" artemisia and Silver Mound. Always separate and soften bright color combinations so they don't clash. Remember, you can move plants around to make them fit your color idea. Just wait until spring or fall to do the transplanting.

Taking The Outside Inside

It's a real joy to grow flowers that you can cut and enjoy indoors. Regrettably, this all too often leaves the flower garden bare. The simple answer is a cutting garden whose only purpose is to provide you with a supply of cut flowers that you can use to bring beauty into your home.

The majority of flowers in a cutting garden should be annuals, because these bloom profusely and keep on producing flowers as you cut off the fresh ones. Of course, annuals are heavy feeders and need to be replanted every year, so a cutting garden can easily turn into a high-maintenance garden if you aren't careful. Keep your cutting garden small and design it with ease of care in mind.

Locate it out of site, since a harvested cutting garden can many times look rather thread bare. However, don't hide it from the sun! It will need an average of at least 6 hours of sunlight to prosper. If you don't have any 'hideaways' and must place it in plain view, try enclosing it with a low picket fence, or a garden wall.

It's best to plant your flowers in a row, just as you would in a vegetable garden, leaving enough space in between so you can harvest them easily. In the next chapter we'll be

Some Cutting Garden Flowers To Pick!

Grow these in an orderly cutting garden and you'll harvest arm loads of beauty to transport into your home.

Annuals

Antirrhinum majus (snapdragon)
Calendula officinalis (calendula, pot marigold)
Callistephus chinensis (China aster)
Celosia cristata (cockscomb)
Centaurea cineraria (dusty miller)
Cleome hassleriana (spiderflower)
Papaver spp. (Poppies)

Bulbs

Convallaria majolis (lily-of-the-valley)
Lilium spp. And hybrids (lilies)
Narcissus spp. And hybrids (daffodils, jonquils and narcissi)
Tulipa spp. And hybrids (tulips)

Perennials

Achillea filipendulina (yarrow)
Aster hybrids (aster)
Chrysanthemum (garden chrysanthemum)
Coreopsis lanceolata (lance leaf coreopsis)
Dicentra spectabilis (common bleeding heart)

looking closely at vegetable gardens, but for now, remember that many of the techniques and ideas in that chapter will stand in good stead with a cutting flower garden, as well. In fact, you may wish to “double up” your vegetable garden and cutting garden into one piece of landscape.

Enjoy the Loveliness Of Your Care Free Flower Garden

We’ve all seen the miraculous, highly sophisticated flower gardens in parks and botanical gardens— and wonder at them with a tinge of envy. However, the smaller, homeier backyard flower garden on your little plot of earth should fill you with special wonder too!

You’ll have created, with your own hands, a flower garden that will allow the same bright sunlight to shine through translucent flower petals, allowing the same sense of peace and joy that those magnificent public gardens allow. Just because it’s on a smaller scale and can’t compete with the many professional landscapers that attack en masse, spending many thousands of dollars and man hours, shouldn’t cause any envy at all.

You see, you now have a care free flower garden — and your weekends too!

Chapter 4: Delicious Weekend Vegetable Gardens



There is nothing, absolutely nothing to compare with garden fresh vegetables and produce. You simply can't beat the fresh taste which literally explodes onto your taste buds. Even the vegetables you get at the local farmers' market, though delightful, still take longer to get from full production and picking to your table. And supermarket vegetables, well let's be kind and just say they just don't compare. Not so with your own veggie garden. You snap a pea, pull an ear of corn, uproot some beets and - ***bang!*** - they are at your table full of vitamins and minerals and bursting with delirious, succulent flavor.

My only word of caution as we enter this enticing world is to make sure you plan to produce only what you really can consume. Making a large garden that's 1,000 square feet for a family of four (or even five and six) is just going to be a time consuming event. Think of gardening as recreation, and grow what you really enjoy - not every vegetable in the catalog.

I don't want you bending down on hands and knees tending a garden that will force you to harvest with an army of workers, sending you on neighborhood jaunts begging folks to take some vegetables from your garden. Don't get me wrong, you can be just as generous, hand out plenty of 'freebies' to friends and neighbors and still plan a garden that makes sense.

Besides growing a carefully chosen selection of favorites, you should plan on the perfect weekend crops - perennial vegetables. Once you've prepared your soil and planted, you'll have asparagus, rhubarb, and other perennial vegetables coming up year after year. That's smart!

In this chapter I'll give you ways to produce large yields in small spaces. We'll look at what's called intensive gardening, renewing every year, making the bed, making an efficient bed garden, some crop tactics, selecting the best vegetables and bringing plants to harvest. Getting hungry, already? Then let's get started.

Intensive Gardening

The best way to get going with your backyard vegetable garden is to cultivate using intensive gardening techniques, which can produce large yields in small places. The process can be boiled down to two practices: creating a rich, abundant soil, and spacing plants in beds instead of rows.

Much of the back breaking chores involved in food gardening can be greatly reduced through intensive gardening simply because you've got a smaller piece of land to work on. Less ground to tend - a smaller garden - means less weeding, water, fertilizing, mulch and even the time it takes to walk through and harvest your garden properly.

Growing plants close to each other allows them to shade the ground, reducing evaporation from the soil and discouraging weeds. Let's begin with the soil.

Step One- The Soil

Intensive gardening requires fluffy, nutrient rich soil. Without great soil vegetables, planted closely together, compete with each other for meager provisions, and everybody loses. Especially you, the weekend gardener.

If you're beginning a new food garden please realize that the effort put into preparing the soil first off, will pay big dividends for years to come. Dig and loosen the garden soil as deeply as possible, and turn in organic matter.

Intensive gardening requires what is called 'double digging' - and it's none too easy. But the result is a loose, deep, fertile soil that water and roots penetrate easily. So put the time and effort into double digging that soil fully first, especially if you have soil that isn't too good to begin with, like that which is light and sandy, heavy and high in clay, or compacted from being walked or driven on.

Regardless of the kind of soil you are faced with always incorporate nutrients and organic matter each year before planting.

Yearly Chores

I know you're probably out of breath from the double digging right now, but here's some good news. You don't have to do this every year. Some gardeners double dig each year before planting and it's just not necessary - especially with raised bed gardening, where the soil won't be compacted from walking or machinery. If the soil is sandy or high in clay content, you might want to double dig, adding some organic matter for the first several years only, until you get the texture you want. Thereafter, all you need to do is work nutrients into the topsoil and take a soil analysis to check it out before planting.

Making The Bed

Now that you've done some double digging and have fluffy bed and incorporated what feels like huge amounts of organic matter into it you'll discover that the bed has increased significantly in volume. The soil you've dug out up will rise above ground level to form a noticeable mound, which is why it is called a raised bed, whether it has sides constructed to hold the soil in place or not. By creating raised beds, separated by permanent walks, none of the precious soil that you've created from the sweat of your brow will be walked on carelessly or lost in rows between your crops.

The easiest way to begin a bed garden is with sloping earth on the sides. However, beds which are boxed in with boards, railroad ties or other construction material have many advantages over mounded beds. One is erosion proofing, ensuring the soil will not wash away. Raised beds with constructed sides are often higher than just mounded beds, so they warm up even sooner and drain much better.

If you currently have a row garden, you can transform it fairly easily into a raised garden bed. Lay out a pattern of beds and walks within the existing plot. Mark the corners of the new beds with stakes, then string a cord along the outlines of the beds. Shovel out some of the soil from the paths and toss it into the beds. Double dig if you wish. Next, work out with rotted manure, compost, grass clippings or peat into the soil in the beds. Cover the paths with wood chips, shredded leaves, gravel, or some paving of your choice to keep out weeds and mud.

Designing Your Bed

I'm going to make you an efficiency expert with the ideas in this section. Saving time on your weekend vegetable garden, like all the rest of your plans to beautify your yard should be accomplished with 'time saving' in mind. That can happen here if you design your layout with some forethought.

Large beds may use every inch of the soil to the max, but tending and harvesting large beds wastes time with many unneeded steps— you'll find yourself constantly traipsing down one side, then another and around again to simply grab a hoe, or pick a pepper, or yank out a weed. All that walking uses up time and energy.

Most seasoned raised bed gardeners recommend beds no wider than 3 ½ to 4 feet, but if you have nice long arms you can push it out to 5 feet away and wide. Reaching into the middle of these beds from either side becomes more manageable. The best length for the beds is usually between 20 and 30 feet, though shorter lengths will do just fine. Just keep in mind my earlier advice to make the garden no bigger than what you intend to consume.

Vegetables require full sun— ideally 6 hours of direct light a day— and they will produce very nicely at this level. So plan on a sunny spot, and be sure to arrange the plants so that don't shade each other. Take the tallest crops, like corn, on the north side of the garden, where the shadows will fall outside the garden beds.

The width of the paths between the beds can vary, but be generous so you'll have plenty of room to maneuver. Paved paths with bricks, concrete pavers, or porous concrete give the garden a year round structure and loveliness which need little care once set.

How To Select Vegetables

All tomatoes are not created equal - and neither are many other vegetables like peppers, cabbages, onions etc. Cultivars of each vegetable can be so different that it's sometimes hard to believe that they are related at all.

If you sit in your arm chair to do your shopping with a number of seed catalogs in your lap, the choices can seem overwhelming. Of course, you can simply choose to plant whatever your local garden center happens to be offering in any particular spring season and be done with it. But shopping for the perfect combination of cultivars is a very pleasant winter activity that you can enjoy indoors during your leisure hours out of the garden.

Here's a helpful tip. If your vegetables have been hard hit by certain insects or diseases most seed catalogs, plant tags and seed packets indicate disease resistance, often by code. Examples include:

A (anthracnose-resistant)

B (blight-resistant)

BM (blue-mold resistant)

BW (bacterial wilt-resistant) **DW** (downy mildew resistant)

F (fusarium-resistant) **HB** (halo-blight resistant)

M (mosaic virus-resistant) **N** (nematode-resistant)

RR (root-rot resistant) **S** (scab resistant)

V (verticillium-resistant) **Y** (yellow virus-resistant)

Some Weekend Crop Tactics

With lack of sunny days, weeds and bugs no one said vegetable gardening was going to be easy. But you can play it smart and make it work by following these tactics:

Select disease-resistant cultivars

Select short-season crops and cultivars, especially in northern climates

Rotate crops from year to year to avoid perpetuating disease and insect problems

Maximize garden space and increase productivity by growing crops on vertical supports

Grow no more than your family can eat fresh and for which you have time to cultivate.

Interplant short-season with long season crops.

Stagger plantings of the same vegetable so the crop doesn't ripen all at once.

Install appropriate bird, insect, and animal deterrents and repellents.

Use a mulch to retain soil moisture and deter weeds

Apply 1 inch of water a week if rainfall isn't sufficient.

When you harvest a crop, fill the bare spot with a quick maturing transplant, an annual flower, or mulch - don't let weeds colonize expose soil.

Grow crops that are known to do well where you live and you'll avoid disappointment. Magazines are full of stories of people bragging about how they were able to succeed with a vegetable garden that may never grow in your area of Missouri. Remember, you're a weekender— so choose fuss free vegetables.

Harvesting Vegetable Plants

I'm sure you'd like to have your produce ready - when you are! Not whenever IT decides to come to fruition and be picked. To accomplish this there are two things you must know: the average last frost date in spring and the average first frost date in fall for the part of the world you live in. The number of days directly between these two dates remain the length of your growing season. It also determines which crops you can and cannot grow.

Seed catalogs and plant tags list the number of days until a plant reaches maturity. These numbers are used as averages; in reality, it varies, depending on local weather and climate.

Where the growing season is short, go for quick-to-mature cultivars of vegetables that normally take a longer time to ripen; avoid those that need long, hot growing seasons. Melons, for instance, can produce in northern climates but their production is limited by a shorter growing season and their sweetness is reduced by cool or cloudy weather.

Selecting seeds from a catalog that specializes in vegetables from your part of the country is the best idea. If you live in the far north, a catalog aimed at northern gardeners will offer cultivars that mature early and produce reliable harvests for that climate. Southern gardeners on the other hand, can find catalogs featuring the best heat-resistant and slow to mature cultivars. These also help in finding cultivars that are insect and disease resistant on a local level.

Weekend Vertical Gardening

There are lots of reasons to try vertical gardening instead of flat horizontal beds in your vegetable cornucopia out in the back yard! For one thing you save space; for instance, a standard watermelon can take up about 100 square feet of garden space - but, by encouraging vining crops like cucumbers, beans, squash, and melons to grow on trellises, fences or poles, they will take up minimal ground space and they even tend to yield better crops this way.

Vertically grown plants tend to bask in the sun all day, high above other plants in your garden and they have plenty of energy for producing the best crops possible.

A strong trellis will always do for lightweight crops like peas, but you'll need something sturdier for heavy plants like melons. You'll find about as many types of trellises and

vertical structures used to hold up crops as you will find different tastes at any given dinner table for the wonderful vegetables you harvest. A tepee of bamboo stakes that are 2X2, or wire mesh, folding A-frames, and dozens more - strings from an overhead structure are ideal for pea growing - once the peas are harvested, the withering vines can be cut down, strings and all and chucked into the compost heap. How convenient!

If your garden is fenced in, the fence can double as a vertical growing place. A chain link or split rail fence faced with hardware cloth or chicken wire keeps out small animals and serves as a bang up trellis for twining crops to climb. A fence offers good support for crops of heavy melons too.

Tomatoes may be easier to grow if they're simply left to sprawl on the ground, but the harvest isn't ever as good. Fruits are too susceptible to rotting and attack by slugs and other pests when grown on the ground, as well. By tying tomatoes to strong wooden stakes or by placing them in cages, (which I highly recommend because cages require so little work) no new growth has to be weaned from the plant and it stays in-bound during the season. Just get the largest cages possible and remember they are easily placed, stacked up and stored after the growing season has ended in winter.

Finally, keep in mind that plants moving UP in the world will always cast a shadow, so don't put them on the south side of the garden— the north side is better. However, in hot climates, the shade cast by a trellis can be a big helper to heat sensitive crops like lettuce and spinach.

You know, the trellises, poles, and vertical growth patterns add a nice visual appeal to your vegetable garden too. That's a nice bonus to these sturdy garden helpers.

Spacing Crops For Weekenders

A good rule in spacing your plants in a garden bed is to move them closer than in a conventional garden. You aren't growing them in rows, but in a mass planting within the bed. A good rule of thumb is to check the instructions on the seed packet, or plant tag. It will recommend let's say, "space plant 6 inches apart in rows 18 inches apart" - ignore the row part of the instructions and note only the spacing within the row. In this case, 6 inches away from each neighboring plant.

Not only does this spacing maximize your gardening area, it minimizes your hoeing chores. You just hoe up and down between young plants and you're done. The entire bed is usually within the hoe's reach this way. A couple of steps, a swipe or two with the hoe to chop off weeds and voila'— a nice easy rake up for the time starved weekender. Of course, later the closely spaced plants get larger and shade out most sprouting weeds for you, as the season progresses!

Vegetable Roommates



Some plants just get along famously. They make good neighbors to each other, not just because they are alike, but because they are so different. They cohabit successfully because each has different needs. You can plant vegetables that are quick to germinate and early to mature alongside slower ones. Root vegetables share space well with leafy vegetables - one takes up the soil space while the other occupies the air space - rather like you do when you place bunk beds in a room. Other examples are lettuce with carrots and spinach with onions.

Leafy greens, which can tolerate and sometimes even need a bit of shade, may be nudged under taller crops like tomatoes or peppers. Any vegetable with tall, skinny tops, like onions, can be coupled with vegetables that are low with spreading foliage like cucumbers. It all adds up to efficient use of space. For ages gardeners have inter-planted radish with carrots. Sown together in the same row the radishes break the ground, allowing the slower, more fragile carrot seedlings to follow.

Keep 'Em Moving Crop Rotation

By rotating crops within your bed you never grow the same crop in the same place year after year. This rotation helps prevent a buildup of insects and disease organisms in a permanent raised bed. Crops like cabbage and its relatives, as well as plants in the nightshade family, such as tomato, eggplant, pepper, and potato, are especially vulnerable to these bad buildups and should always occupy new space next growing season.

This also helps you to prevent depleting the soil of nutrients. A general rotation rule says to begin with fruiting plants, replace with leafy plants and follow these with root crops. You always should enrich the soil with legume. If you have heavy feeders (cole crops, cucurbits, corn, and tomatoes) follow them with legumes (peas, beans, and peanuts) that fix nitrogen levels and can thus improve soil fertility.

Overwhelmed? OK. Just remember to simply alternate root crops with leafy or fruiting crops - it's better than not rotating at all.

Small gardens (like the one I suggested in the beginning of this chapter for you to adopt) can be mighty testing with this issue of rotation. Juggling your crops around and still trying to do all the other things like placing stalked plants on one side of the garden for sunlight and shade - can have you pulling your hair out in no time. So I don't want you to lose sleep over this issue.

Just enjoy the process, you're a weekender and if you plant carrots where the beats were last year it's not the end of the world. One thing that's extra easy is to simply keep an eye on your plants. If the cabbage got struck by a disease this year just don't plant it in the same location next season. One good resource for identifying diseases is *Rodale's Garden Insect, Disease, and Weed Identification Guide* by Miranda Smith and Anna

Carr. They provide control recommendations. Just remember to remove stricken plants right away along with any debris around them - throw them away -don't compost them and plan on replacing them with resistant cultivars.

Coming Back For Seconds And Thirds And..

Some plants just love to be harvested. The more you pick them clean the more they produce. Or look at it this way; if they are allowed to mature fully they will stop producing. Snap bean, lima bean, and pea plants produce more pods if picked regularly while young. Summer squash will keep a mighty plentiful bargain with you, right up until frost sets in as long as the young fruits are picked. Most surprising of all are the cole crops, like cabbage and broccoli. Don't pull the cabbage from the ground at harvest time - cut it just above ground level, leaving a stub and the roots right in the ground. Then cut an X in the stub head - you know what? It will produce several more heads for you. With broccoli, don't uproot the plant either. Side shoots will spout, and each will produce a small head.

Those Everlasting Perennial Crops



Perennial vegetables were tailor made for weekend gardeners like you and me. Just be patient because some may take several seasons to get well enough established to produce high yields, but have no fear, once they start delivering produce they do it in bucket loads and with very little care needed from you.

Try rhubarb and asparagus, but also perennial onions, Jerusalem artichoke, and sorrel. Once established all of these will produce for years with little care, and all but the asparagus and rhubarb, will provide good harvests in the first year, too.

It's best to give perennial vegetables their own area of the garden, because they might get injured by working the soil each time you plant or remove other annual crops. Try and combine them in a bed just for perennial vegetables— rhubarb and asparagus are traditionally planted together; one lined up behind the other so the taller asparagus compliments the lower growing rhubarb plants. Jerusalem artichoke can spread pretty widely so place it where you can control its growth. Perennial onions will grow just about anywhere there is full sun. Other perennials that are used for greens grow joyfully together side by side, making salad picking easy as all get out!

Keep this area happy by replenishing the soil in fall and spring. Just work in a couple of inches of rotted manure or compost to the top layer of soil.

One final word about vegetables and Old Man Jack Frost. Savvy weekend gardeners know that a light frost needn't spell disaster in Fall if you know to be prepared. Cover your plants, especially the tender crops, with an overnight covering. You can use anything light, even shower curtains! I've staked them over tomatoes plants in a few short minutes and covered sprawling vining plants too. Old blankets work fine, too. Just make sure you place stakes down to keep the fabric off the plants. Remove in the morning.

Weekender's Quick Tip

Problem: *A large vegetable garden requires too much heavy lifting and hard work.*

Quick Fix: Scale down the size of the garden and plant it closely in beds, which will shade out weeds, rather than constructing it in rows. Mulch heavily to prevent weeds from invading young vegetable plants.

This chapter doesn't cover all the many vagaries of vegetable gardening. I'd have to write a whole other book to cover the many different ways that all the vegetables available could make their way to your dinner table. But I'm quite happy to know that the adventure this kind of garden can provide you, will be one that will last a lifetime. Your dining will never be the same once your family tastes the succulent freshly picked vegetables from your very own backyard cornucopia. - Bon Appetit!

Chapter 5: Fruits Made Easier



The whole thrust of this chapter is to show you, the inveterate weekend gardener, how to grow more fruit with less work.

No one will argue with the fact that home-grown, tree ripened fruits (like vegetables, sans the trees) taste better than anything you can buy, anywhere at anytime. But let me start with a word of outright caution.

If you're a beginner, or if you're time starved (and that's probably why you bought this book to begin with) then stick with small fruits and forget about accruing fruit trees that can really make for hard, intensive, time consuming labor.

Now, let's get to the two top producing, easiest and most prolific of the small fruits. A great place to begin is with blueberries and Fall raspberries. Right behind these two low-maintenance staples are bush berries, currants, and gooseberries.

Next up the ladder, and considered moderate maintenance fruits are summer raspberries, strawberries, and blackberries.

At the top of the maintenance ladder, high-maintenance that is, are: citrus, grapes, cherries, pears, apples, peaches, plums and quince.

In this chapter I'll tell you in detail how to best grow easy-care, and moderate-care fruits. You'll learn how to select the right cultivars for your climate and I'll throw in a warning about the pitfalls in growing each type of fruit. We want a great harvest, and as little work as possible - a theme that stretches the length and breadth of this book.

Before we begin, let me remind you that your local Extension service is a great place for information about cultivars best adapted to your area and climate. Now, are you ready to get fruity with me?

Blueberries: The Friendliest Of All



They are foolproof and can't be beat as a home-grown fruit. It's a perfect crop for weekend gardeners because the bushes need very little pruning, and that pruning requires almost no skill. These little blue buttons of joy are a weekender's nicest friend. The Blueberry bush doesn't need to be trained or trellised, and it is no trouble warding off insects and diseases. The ripe fruits keep well on the bush, which helps us weekenders, who can only check things out periodically—like on the weekends! Ripe strawberries and bramble fruits wouldn't last from one weekend to another— but these Blueberries always do, unless the birds beat you to it!

There are three main types of Blueberries that can be cultivated— highbush, rabbiteye, and the often called half-high blueberries, which are hybrids. Each performs best in different climates. At least one type or another will flourish from USDA plant hardiness

Zones 3-10 in any garden where the soil requirements can be met. A fine bonus is that all three are attractive shrubs that can double as landscape plants in hedges, borders, and foundation plantings. Blueberry flowers are white, bell shaped, and resemble Lili-of-the-Valley; foliage gleams nicely and is dark in summer and dark red in fall. Even in barren winter these bushes put out a nice reddish cast.

You'll love these new found friends even more when you realize they can be kept well in a refrigerator if stored unwashed, but they do freeze up easily so always pop them, unwashed, into jars or those commercial freezer bags (like Zip Lock) and then place them in the freezer. Use them in muffins, pancakes, cobblers, and pies - mmm, yummy!

How To Care For Blueberries- The Basics

Now that you realize that Blueberries are very trouble free fruits, as long as they are grown in the proper soil, sit back and enjoy them because they will greet you year after year.

Blueberries require soil that is quite acidic - between pH 4.5 and 5.5 - and highly organic. Clay soil or alkaline soil spells death for these all purpose fruit plants. A pH higher than 5.8 may cause nutrient deficiencies, reducing growth and yellow foliage. Any higher and you may kill the plant itself. Rabbiteye blueberries can tolerate slightly less acid soil- up to pH 6.0 if the soil is improved with peat.

Perform a soil test first, before you plant blueberries to see if the pH range is within tolerance. If the soil is not acid enough, you can lower the pH sufficiently by working in a lot of acid peat. Dig a large, wide planting hole and refill with a mixture of half native soil and half sphagnum peat moss, which is very acid. You can lower pH by adding elemental sulphur to the soil.

Planting And Feeding

Blueberries

If the soil is now up to snuff, plant the blueberries where they will receive at least 6 hours of sunlight a day. Space high bushes types 4-6 feet apart in rows that must be 10 feet apart, rabbiteye 10 feet apart in

Is there A Soil Doctor In The House?

Most of us weekenders don't pay much attention to pH in our gardens. But blueberries are finicky about this natural balancing of the soil. You don't need to waste money on expensive soil testing equipment, a simple roll of pH paper from a scientific supply house can be used. Just mix a soil sample with enough distilled water to get a thick substance and dip in the paper. The paper turns color according to the soils pH. If you don't get a reading that matches the tolerance level of your Blueberries (pH 4.5 to 4.8) you can lower it by adding wettable ground sulphur (from any garden center) to the soil, or by incorporating organic material such as acid peat moss or oak-leaf mold.

Pull the pH paper out every year and do a test just to check to see if you soil needs some 'doctoring'.

rows 15 feet apart, and half-highs 2-3 feet apart in rows 5 feet apart. Cover the soil with a 6 inch layer of organic mulch or compost. Keep this moist and undisturbed.

When these plants are content they are highly productive and may take up to eight full years to reach their peak. You can look for a mature bush to produce 4-10 quarts of blueberries over its 4-week long season. So you don't need a lot of these bushes to come away with loads of fine blueberries to eat up!

Another good tip is to remove all flowers for the first two years after planting to encourage strong vegetative growth. Simply slide your fingers along the branches and rub off the flowers buds when they begin to open. You can begin harvesting the third year.

The actual nutritional needs of blueberries are low. All they want is a yearly application of 3 ounces of usable nitrogen in the form of cottonseed meal, blood meal, or soybean meal each spring. An inch of water a week and renew the mulch every year. Pretty simple care— that's why blueberries are a favorite friend of mine!

Pruning Blueberries

Just a little pruning goes a long way with blueberries. Actually, the high-bush and half-highs you won't need to prune at all except for dead branches during the first six-to eight years. After that just saw off the oldest stems at ground level.

Rabbiteye blueberries need a bit more tending so the berries don't ripen out of reach. Prune lightly each year during the dormant season. All you need to do is remove the tops of tall canes, thin out older interior growth and remove low twigs that are shaded and unproductive.

Finally, don't be too eager to pick your blueberries too soon. They turn blue a few days to a full week before they should be taken; the central berries of a cluster ripen first. Ripe blueberries fall right into your hand when brushed slightly. Unripe blueberries have a red ring around the bud scar. The slight waxy covering is an important reason blueberries are such tough little guys, so be glad for it. Just wash them clean when you are ready to consume them.

Scrumptious Strawberries



Did you know that Strawberries have a kind of internal biological clock that ticks away the length of days as the seasons pass? They set flowers and fruit in response to day length, and the three major types of strawberries are divided accordingly.

June bearing strawberries, for instance begin flowering in late spring in the North, and fruits ripen about a month later— in June or July. These are single crop plants that give

us fruit for about three or four weeks, there are early-, mid-, and late-season cultivars from which to choose. The shortening days of fall trigger the plants to set flower buds, which remain dormant over the winter and provide the flowering season's crop.

Ever bearing strawberries have been brought to us by science. These produce a large crop in June, scattered berries in summer, and a smaller crop in late August. Before you get any flowering or fruit, ever bearers must have days that are slightly longer than those that trigger June bearing strawberries. Although the early summer crop arises from flower buds formed the proceeding fall, as days shorten after the summer solstice more flowers buds form. These produce what we all like, fruit in late summer or early fall. Ever bearers are especially productive in northern climates where summer days are long. The total harvest is much less than for June bearers, but the harvest is spread out over a longer period of time.

Not too long ago, the University of California and the USDA designed a new cultivar that actually does bear fruit practically nonstop. These 'day-neutral' berries produce plowers and berries on continuous 6 week cycles, unaffected by day length, making them pretty close to really being 'ever-bearing'. They are unusually productive and will produce fruit from June through October in northern areas; January through August in mild climes.

Day neutrals have become so popular and bear such fruit that the older ever bearing types are losing favor with both home gardeners and the commercial market growers. Add one up for science joining mother nature!

But nothing is perfect. Be forewarned, - as good as these day-neutrals sound they require a lot of pampering. They are small and fragile so weeds can quickly destroy them and they are more sensitive to heat and drought. Moreover, you must harvest berries throughout the season so older spoiled ones don't spread any disease throughout the plant.

That's why, even though these new miracle cultivars are fast outrunning ever bearers in popularity for weekenders like us, the good old ever bearers remain my recommendation. You get two good sized harvests that, to me, are easier to deal with than one giant June bearing crop or the day neutral's season long picking requirement.

Whoa! Strawberry Stampede!

Strawberries can really run rampant if not managed properly. Their growth pattern leads to most of the intensive work on this fruit. They can reproduce aggressively by sending out runners from the main crown. These runners root at the tips, forming smaller plants. Each of these in turn sends out their own runners. So, it's easy to see things can get out of hand quickly if you don't manage growth with strawberries. Just as with plants, day length plays a large role in growth. Long days stimulate June bearers to produce runners. Ever bearers produce fewer runners, because some of their energy goes into producing their late-season harvest rather than the runners. Day-neutral strawberries produce the fewest runners.

There are *three* traditional ways to manage strawberries— *the hill, matted row, and spaced row systems*. All of them are predicated on how the runners are handled. Additionally different kinds of strawberries respond differently to each method.

In the hill system, plants are spaced fairly close and all runners are removed. The matted row system is just the opposite with the plants spaced farther apart and runners are left to grow as they will; the smaller plants that result just fill in the spaces between the parent plant. The spaced row system is a compromise: A few runners are left on each plant and allowed to form smaller plants. These are then moved physically and pinned down so the plantlets are spaced evenly around the parent plant; any subsequent runners are pinched off.

All three systems require some work, there's just no getting around it. With the hill system you've got to keep an eye open for runners several times a week so you can remove them, especially on long summer days. The matted row method is easy, and produces berries for up to three years depending on the strength of the plant itself but there is a 'crowding' issue with this. They can bunch together so much that mold and mildew form. Half the bed in a matted row should always be removed every year to promote productivity. The spaced row system might seem the least 'work intensive' of the group but, not really. Making the decisions on which plants to keep and which to discard and then deciding which to pin down, can frustrate any weekend gardener that's short on time.

Here's the breakdown on each cultivar and which management system works best for them and you:

The best deal for **June bearers** is the matted row. Begin by spacing 25 plants about 18 to 24 inches apart in four or five 10 foot long rows. Each row should be 4 feet apart. The second summer after planting, immediately after the harvest is finished, set your lawn mower blade to about 2 ½ inches and mow the entire bed. Rake out any debris to show the unshorn crowns of the strawberry plants. Then narrow the width of rows to 12 inches by tilling under the plants on the edges. A small rotary tiller works best for this. This is a great time to add some more manure for nitrogen content, too. Now just water the bed and mulch the plants. For the rest of the summer the remaining plants will vigorously produce runners and a great crop the following year.

The best route to take with **Ever bearing** plants is the hill method, since mid-summer (as in the matted row method) would destroy the fall crop. Since ever-bearers produce fewer runners anyway, it isn't hard to keep up. Ten minutes a weekend should do it for 25 plants. You'll get luscious large berries, which are more resistant to disease because the crop gets good air circulation.

Set plants about 1 foot apart in rows 2 feet apart. Remove all the runners for the first two years. In the third year allow enough runners to root in a row to replace the mother plants, which by now, will have overgrown because they have formed multiple crowns. Now all you need to do is remove the original plants after they have borne fruit in the fall. Apply fertilizer each year as soon as the spring harvest is done.

For **day-neutral strawberries** use the modification of the hill method that promises greater yields. Start by planting double rows of strawberries spaced 3 ½ to 4 feet. Place the plants 7 inches apart about four inches from the center line, staggering them so they don't line up side by side. Now remove all the flower buds for the first 6 weeks after planting and all the runners for the first season. Day-neutrals produce fewer runners anyway, so this lessens your work load considerably. It's a good idea to side-dress these kinds of strawberries with rotted manure once a month during the growing season.

Now that you've decided which plants you want to grow, and chosen a method to grow them, the rest becomes easy. Now we simply select a spot for your strawberry patch, get the plants in the ground and started, and then wait for those delectable treats to come to harvest.

Strawberry Planting & Feeding

Remember, strawberries want a lot of sunshine, sandy loam, and a pH of about 6.2, although they are surprisingly hardy and can take conditions less than perfect. Prepare the bed by tilling in 3 to 4 inches of well-rotted manure before you actually plant. Plant the strawberries, which are almost always going to be offered at your local nursery as bare-roots, in spring as soon as the ground has warmed.

For most homesteads 25 plants is quite enough, if you desire more just remember that you can grow more from the runners later. It's usually best to get them in the ground as soon as you buy them, although you can keep bare-root plants in the refrigerator for a few days if the weather is cooperating with you. Be sure the packing material is moist but not soggy.

When planting time comes, place the plants in a bucket of water and carry it right to the garden. This gives the plants an opportunity to soak up much needed moisture and protects them from drying out while you are planting them.

Sweet Strawberry Gardening Tips

Even though they are one of the easiest fruits to grow; strawberries, here are still a few tips that will make your experience foolproof:

Perennial weeds, especially grass, can ruin your strawberry plants. Keep them out by carefully preparing the bed and mulching.

Overcrowded beds are susceptible to mildew and fungal diseases. Keep those runners manageable.

Strawberries need an inch of water a week through their growing cycle. Drip water is best.

Excessive overhead watering and heavy rain during fruit ripening results in flabby, tasteless fruit. Cover So don't water them this way and cover them with cheesecloth if you expect a real thunderstorm with heavy downpours.

Pick ripe berries every other day to keep mold from invading and covering the entire bed. Always remove the ripe berries and any infected or malformed ones too. This helps prevent disease invasion from spreading.

Strawberries must be planted at the proper depth, with the crown just at the soil line. Make a deep planting hole with a cone of soil in the center to support the crown and drape your roots into the hole around the cone. Now fill in the hole and surround with mulch. Just make sure the crown is not sticking out too high from the soil line or buried too deep.

Remember also, June bearers will not provide a harvest until a year after planting. For ever bearers and day-neutrals remove all the flower buds that form until the first of July. First year ever bearers will produce a pretty large first year crop, and day-neutrals will produce from middle summer through the fall. If you live in the southern (warmer) climates you can expect a full harvest the next growing season without removing any buds.

Big Show Brambles!



No doubt one of the most popular of fruits are red raspberries and blackberries. In climates like California you can add boysenberries. These are called bramble fruits, and even though they store poorly and are labor intensive; they are expensive at market and they spoil so quickly, growing them from your home garden makes some definite sense.

As with all fruits and vegetables fresh brambles, taste so much better when you grow them and eat them close to harvest.

Which Brambles?

All brambles are more time intensive than our blueberries and strawberries and these prickly group of berries fall into two main groups. Raspberries and blackberries, which are further divided by characteristics. Both bear berries that consist of a cluster of small, jewel-like fruits with seeds in them, called drupelets. These drupelets are clustered on a tiny receptacle. When you pick raspberries, the receptacle remains on the plant. When you pick blackberries these remain attached to the berry itself.

There are red, yellow, black and purple raspberries. Blackberries are still, upright plants which include dewberries, boysenberries and loganberries.

Raspberries and blackberries have a lot in common, but grow differently enough to make sorting out their needs seem difficult, at first. One reason for this is that some raspberry types are grown like the blackberries and vice versa.

The common denominator with brambles is the biennial growth pattern of their canes, or shoots, and in the plant's tendency to enlarge great thickets if left alone. The roots of each live indefinitely, however, each bramble cane lives for only two years. In the first year, a new cane sprouts from the crown and continues through the summer. It forms flower buds in the fall that will bring you the following year's fruit. The exception to the rule are the ever bearing red and yellow raspberries which produce crops of berries, one in summer and another in the fall.

A Trellis and A Bramble

Would you like to tie your bramble canes? That may seem like a bit of a pain to a weekend gardener and when it seems like most folks like a casual approach to these berries; they can, of course be left to grow anyway you choose but they do much better when they are trellised. Wire trellises simplify pruning and harvesting, which will save you time down the road. It also exposes the plants to more sunlight and air, causing

vigorous growth, while lessening fungal disease. I like the idea of simply reaching over instead of bending down and stretching out to grab a handful of berries, myself.

Another benefit is that once you construct the wire trellis, it's ready for every year after. Then harvesting on a Saturday morning becomes very easy, and fits most time-squeezed gardeners with a bit more slack. You'll find that the red and yellow raspberries are especially fond of trellising. They may seem to stand up on their canes just fine by themselves at first, but later when they are laden with fruit they tend to bend over toward the ground. This creates a tangle, dirties the fruit and makes them more susceptible to slugs and other pests.

The easiest way to trellis is to grow the berries in a hedgerow, anchored in place by four wires suspended from posts. First, plant the raspberries 2 ½ feet apart in a long row. Then build the trellis using pairs of 8-foot-long metal posts driven into the ground on either side of the row. Beginning at one end of the row, space pairs of posts about 20 to 25 feet. The pairs should be spaced about 2 ½ feet apart. Drive them into the ground about 2 feet deep, suspend wires the length of each side of the row at about 2 ½ feet and 5 feet high.

The canes that grow up within the defined space will lean against the wires and be supported without needing to be tied. During the summer, once a week walk between the rows and tuck in any wayward canes and yank out any suckers growing beyond the limits of the hedgerow. Then in late winter or early spring, before any growth occurs, thin the brambles by removing weak or damaged canes. Your thickest canes will produce the most fruit. So don't be afraid to remove those that are too thin and spindly.

Brambles Basic Care

Good soil with plenty of moisture offer the best growth and produce, even though blackberries, especially dewberries, will tolerate less than optimum soil and drought conditions. Try and use a fast draining loamy soil. An inch of water a week during the actual growing season is ideal, either from rain or your watering hose.

Apply a deep organic mulch at the beginning of the season which will keep the soil moist while discouraging weeds. These roots are shallow so if you cultivate to rid your area of weeds you may damage them. To help here, in the spring, peel back the mulch and

Super Simple & Easy Brambles!

Here's the easiest way a weekender can grow raspberries.

Make the red & yellow types of ever bearing raspberries a single-crop without trellising or selective pruning.

Do this and your harvest will be hugely bountiful.

Space the plants about 2 ½ feet apart and let them fill in a 1 ½ foot-wide hedgerow.

Each year cut off the canes at ground level in late winter while they are dormant.

'Heritage', a much loved ever bearing red raspberry, adapts well to this method.

Whatever you choose make sure your crop is one that ripens before frost sets in

spread a shovelful of rotted manure over the ground around each plant. Always replace and renew the mulch each year. That's it!

Is your Bramble Sick?

There are viral diseases that can cause premature aging (less produce) and a rapid decline in your plants. Insects are the little critters responsible for these viral episodes and there's not much you can do about it. But if you purchase certified virus-free plants at least you're a bit ahead of the bugs. Certified stock costs more, but there's more at stake here than just dollars and cents. You'll save time and frustration - and I put a premium on that!

Though you'll find that brambles do get their share of fungal diseases and insects, many can be handles by simple, good sanitation. Get rid of any sick looking canes, and don't compost them; burn them or put them out to the trash bin. If you notice any wild cousins forming in your garden get rid of them as well, they can carry insects and spread other pests too. It's best to place red raspberries at least 300 feet from black ones. Insects like to carry diseases from the heartier reds to the more susceptible blacks. Also blacks are very contagious to a virus called *verticillium wilt*, and for that reason should be kept away from tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, asparagus, strawberries, or other raspberries that have grown in a particular location in years past.

Currants and Gooseberries



Growing currants and gooseberries couldn't be easier. Trouble free and needing very little care, they are great for weekend gardeners that want to remember the days when grandmother's kitchen overflowed with the aroma of gooseberry pie and currant jelly.

You can practically ignore these fruits until harvest. They are hard to find at most markets, so they make ideal fruits for the backyard personal garden. They are very hardy and do very well in the colder climate zones (up to Zone 3) in the far north. You'll find that each offers fruits of a sparkling color, translucent berries that are a delight to the eye as well as the palate.

Be aware that some states have actually outlawed the growing of gooseberries and currants because they can carry a fungus (white pine blister rust) that directly attacks pine trees. Check with your local county agricultural extension service before making a purchase. Even if growing currants is legal in your state, you may want to plant them away from pines that are around your property. There are rust resistant varieties available and those are the ones you should purchase.

Currants may be red, black, or white. When they are fully ripe they have a tart, sweet taste and can be eaten right from your hand, but traditionally go into the production of

jelly products. They look so beautiful you may actually hesitate before eating them. White currants are actually yellow and are cultivated from the red currants.

Black currants are a prized European fruit that is not so well known in the States. They have a strong musky taste, and though some people take an instant dislike to their flavor— they remain a rare commodity. Individual berries are fairly small so when you pick them it's best to save some frustration and grab an entire cluster. Don't bother with the stems either, when making jelly because they'll get caught in the cheesecloth as you strain them.

Gooseberries are much larger than currants, almost as big as a grape, and have dark striped skin that is usually yellow-green, purple or red. Although they are tart to the taste before ripeness, once fully cultivated these cultivars turn sweet. Gooseberries make fine pies, cobblers and tarts.

Caring For Currants and Gooseberries

Filtered shade is a very good friend to both gooseberries and currants, especially if you experience hot summers. Space the plants about 5 feet apart, in rows 7 or 8 feet apart. They grow best in soil that is fertile and deeply mulched, yet they seem to tolerate both heavy and sandy soil as long as you keep it wetted down. Use rotted manure or compost each spring as a mulch and you'll see that is all the nutrition these easy-care fruits need!

Prune out older stems at ground level each year always removing canes that are four years old while leaving behind the more productive younger canes. Even if you slip up on the pruning these fruits are very forgiving, however, by doing this four year cycle of pruning you will allay the possibility of fungal diseases.

Red currants and gooseberries are what is called 'self-fertile' and may require cross pollination and therefore don't always provide a good crop of fruit. A mature plant will produce 2 to 3 quarts of berries each harvest, gooseberries 3 to 4 quarts, so you only need a few to get plenty of pies and jellies each year.

A Fruity Conclusion

As a weekender you can choose from many kinds of fruits for your garden, but as has been stressed throughout this book you want to find ways to sharply cut down on care and maintenance.

Some good tips, and simple steps you can take include:

Select plants carefully. Purchase only those cultivars that are best for your garden and climate.

Look for disease and insect resistant varieties.

Remember harvesting isn't all joy and expectation. It requires work, too. Fruits are perishable and you must pick them on time, in season, and when ripeness has been achieved.

Prepare the soil with careful attention before you plant

Fruit trees require tons of man-hours and that's one reason I didn't mention them here. The plant varieties take much less care and are far more forgiving of the weekend gardener that 'just doesn't have the time'.

But Oh! The taste and variety of home grown fruits (and vegetables) are such a true marvel that once you grow your own, your life (and dinner table) will never be the same!

Weekender's Quick Tip

Problem: *Fruit trees require too much pruning and pest control.*

Quick Fix: Choose low-maintenance berry bushes instead. Try fruit plants that need less pruning or can double as landscape plants.

Chapter 6: Natural Landscapes



When we encounter a natural landscape of mountain range, woodland waterfall or deep forested valleys with wildflower meadows - it can take our breath away. We are transported to a place of relaxation and contemplation within ourselves. The repast enjoyed by such scenes are enough to make the most work-adverse weekend gardener aspire to greatness with nature.

In a corner of your very own property you can have an island retreat of wildflowers, a glowing, bubbly brook to wind around your mind, walkways that beckon you to explore and help you forget the mundane and commonplace.. Homemade versions of natural landscapes by necessity must be on a smaller scale than in wild nature, of course. Our grassy meadows and woodland wildflower walks must be placed in scale to how much real estate we have to work with. But the imaginative gardener can use the landscape gardens mentioned in this chapter to make ideal sweeps of beauty that will be the envy of all who view them.

As always, we must find a way to make them low-maintenance. And you'll be happy to know that nothing is easier than a natural landscape to care for. After all, you are dealing, for the most part, with indigenous plantings that will live very well when left to Mother Nature to tend. After all, She made not only the plot your working in, the conditions that cause this garden to flourish, but the plants themselves.

They can become really *un-demanding* as part of your overall plan for a backyard paradise. Whether planted with only naturalized or native plants, or with a combination of the two, or by adding some exotics that are well adapted to your site, full color and joy can be found in a natural landscape. Gardens that really imitate nature offer low-maintenance alternatives for gardeners that want to bring a touch of natural beauty, but require little attention after the initial efforts to establish your backyard landscape.

A Few Basic Principles

Keep these key basics in mind and apply them to making a successful naturalistic landscape. The natural landscape garden *will* require work, even though the slick gardening magazines, filled with spectacular photos of wildflowers spewed across a gorgeous natural meadow setting, complete with sketchy instructions on how to accomplish such a marvel, may cause you to think that this kind of effort is unnecessary; the truth is the effort goes directly into the beginning set-up of your garden. Naturalistic gardens are less work intensive than the manicured variety, especially once they are established, but proper soil preparation, planting, watering and weeding are essential at the onset. Only when you successfully nurture your natural setting through its infant stage will you later be able to sit back and enjoy it as it easily maintains itself. The objective is to arrange plants in a design that matches nature itself and using plants with growing conditions that match the site you have to work in.

Select native plants - wildflowers, grasses, ferns, trees, shrubs, and vines— that are indigenous to your part of the country and naturally adapted to conditions in your garden setting. Native plants, as expected, thrive in their natural environment, and there is no need for chemical fertilizers, pesticides and forced watering. Native plants and wildflowers will survive in your landscape only when they are planted in a situation that truly mimics their natural habitat. Plant a Texas bluebonnet in upstate New York and it will die; a woodland wildflower in a sunny meadow and you get the same dire result.

If you want to remain a happy weekender, don't fall into the trap of trying to create a particular condition where they don't exist naturally - like turning an acid woodland where the conditions are naturally alkaline. Go with Mother Nature - not against her!

Native Or Natural?

When selecting plants for a naturalistic landscape sooner or later the question of plant origin comes up. Many common American roadside wildflowers are actually European natives that came over with the Colonists, others hitchhiked along as weed seed contained in the actual crop seed.

Some purists believe these naturalized plants have no place in a true naturalized garden. Only plants that are actually native to the region are accepted by these folks.

Kinds of Wildflowers - Definitions

The following definitions will help you choose the types of wildflowers that can be useful to a weekend natural landscape plan:

Native Plants - herbaceous flowers, ferns, grasses, shrubs, trees, and vines that originated in a specific geographical area and grow there naturally.

Naturalized Plants - Plants introduced to an area by an outside agent but now grow in the wild without assistance.

Wildflowers - herbaceous flowers of field and forest.

Forbs - Wildflowers that are not grasses.

Warm Season Grasses - Grass that grows slowly during cool weather, grows in summer, and goes dormant during winter.

Cool Season Grasses - Grass that goes dormant during the heat of summer, many times turning brown, with growth in cool spring and fall, often remaining green in winter.

Weeds - Any plant that is not wanted technically speaking. One that can overgrow areas rapidly and are thought of as unsightly and aggressive.

Indigenous Plants - Plants that grow naturally in a particular area and are from that area.

Exotics - Non-native plants brought to cultivation from another geographical area, usually another continent or markedly different habitat.

Cultivated Plants - These plants are grown on purpose by gardeners and farmers for beauty or economic worth. Cultivated plants are often exotics and incapable of existing without human care.

I disagree and see this view as a bit rigid, and consider the immigrant plants as full citizens now which deserve equal plots of ground of their own; right next to their home grown brothers and sisters.

Regardless of this rather arcane discussion, a weekender is best served by any naturalized plant or native variety that thrives within the direct confines of the habitat you live in now.

Your Woodland Garden - A Shaded Paradise

In a few short seasons you can have a lovely shaded area. Let's imagine an already wooded corner of your current property of about 50 feet by 50 feet with an old oak, a few tall red maples, four black cherries, a couple of dogwoods and an undergrowth of sassafras saplings. If they grow in a grove like setting together their branches are not widespread, creating a woodland effect in a relatively small area.

But that is just an imaginary setting. You will need to see if your property contains areas like this that are already filled in indigenous plants, flowers, trees, shrubs and vines that you can convert into a more cultivated area for a naturalistic garden area. So it's time to look your property over again and choose an area that is conducive to some energetic development and creative shaping.

Don't be too eager to jump in and start planting. Evaluate the site and see what it already has to offer. You might even take a preliminary nature walk through your area state parks, national forests or other local sites to see what is bountiful around you. A forest's elevation, exposure, native soil type, and the amount of rainfall all influence what grows where you live. I like to get on my hands and knees and actually feel the soil, observe its moisture content. Pay close attention to it because that's what you must have in your own backyard garden for this wooded garden to thrive.

On your nature walk look at where and what kind of tall trees there are; the under story of small trees and shrubs. Look at the forest floor and the kind of wildflowers, ferns, ground covers and rotting branches and logs that are about. Notice how the flowers are grouped; are they single patches or do they run wild in a large mass? Take a look at the way the plants are distributed because you want to eventually attempt a garden that resembles these natural formations.

Look all around you. Let the scene soak in and start to imagine how you can take what you see into your beautiful backyard natural garden area. Look carefully at the forest light that is hitting the plants and wildflowers. How shaded is it? Can that effect be created in your backyard. Compare your selected site to what you find on your nature walk; only then can you have an effortless garden that will be a joy to construct and will be low-maintenance later on.

Check The Soil pH And Other Considerations

As you select plants for your wooded natural landscape, you'll find native plants and wildflowers that tolerate a wide range of soil pH are available; there are others that are very particular about pH. Test your soil before you begin planting, and only then should you select appropriate plants. A range between 5.0 and 6.0 will support the widest assortment of plants.

Shady spots underneath trees can often be surprisingly dry, because the trees' surface roots take most of the water content and nutrients. Beneath these greedy roots, especially with maples and ashes, you should avoid starting a woodland garden. You'll know if dry, root clogged soil is a problem because the ground feels hard and compacted; you'll have trouble making a hole with a trowel. Speaking of digging, don't be shy about digging a hole deep enough to allow you to see and remove any roots that are an inch or less in diameter, which you will replace with compost. This larger hole will allow shrubs enough growing room to become established before tree roots return. Grow your woodland garden only when you can scoop up the topsoil with your hands, or you can add humus, compost, or shredded leaves as cover before you plant.

Shaded Areas

Did you know there are many kinds of shade? Oh yes - from heavy, light and partial to diffused, filtered, or half shade - it can get confusing. I find it much simpler to consider instead how the shade we are looking at is created in the woodland setting. Shadows cast from overhead branches fall on the forest floor, throwing into shadow. The density of the shadow depends on the density of those branches. If you're in a forested area with a lot of evergreens, the thickly needled branches of those trees can keep the forest floor in pretty dense shadow year round. Then there are the streams of light that cause shade to reach the floor all through winter from late spring through fall mixed with lighted areas, especially in the Northeast. Other forests cause a mix of evergreen and deciduous, creating light that varies widely throughout the forest.

Why all this talk about shade? *Because most wildflowers prosper in a forest area that produces more light than shade.* You will usually be working with trees in your natural setting and the shade they produce can make the difference in where you plant your flowers, flowering shrubs and other plants. This is another reason to take that nature walk we mentioned a moment ago. By trying to re-create circumstances you find in the wild you'll achieve more success in your backyard.

Choosing Your Site

I hope you are lucky enough to have a lot of property to work with; an acre or more for a natural landscape. If there are a group of trees already on the property, so much the better. You can work around these existing elements to create a wonderful garden area.

If this isn't your situation, don't despair. Just look for a group of trees that you can use. Trees native to your region are preferable and it helps if they are spaced so their canopies meet and intermingle a bit. Deep rooted species are best, with roots that go deep and avoid robbing the upper soil of moisture.

No trees or not enough? Then woodland plants under the branches of a single tree, if it's large enough, can work wonders for a new garden area. You can also work in shade provided on the north or east side of your house, as long as the soil suits the plants.

I must say though, the very best is a grove of trees (3 or more) to create the effect of a woodland and provide the shade needed.

Let's Spark Up The Soil

Look over your grove. If it has been neglected clear out the unwanted undergrowth. If you are one of the exceptional home owners that has a grove that is too cared for — my, what a surprise - you may need to work at returning it to a more natural state before planting. In this case the soil is probably compacted and dry and it's also robbed of nutrients which makes it unwelcoming to woodland plants.

To get your soil to its woodland equivalent layer put chopped-up leaves and twigs over the soil. Chop them to the size of a half-dollar and spread them several inches deep beneath the tree boughs. You should sprinkle the leaves with some compost to activate moisture. Repeat this every year until the leaves have rotted into a fine humus. Earthworms will then start appearing and will loosen the subsoil for you. Nice little helpers! Only when you have a loose soil such as this can you begin installing your woodland masterpiece.

Those tall, high branched deciduous trees like just the right amount of light for woodland species. You can prune off low-hanging branches (below 20 feet) but no higher, unless it is completely overgrown in which case you will probably have to hire an arborist to thin up high (but not too much, okay?) What you wish to achieve is a dappled light, not too dark or gloomy. You may have to thin your grove of trees every few years to maintain this light to shade balance.

Let's Get Some Woodland Plants

Serious gardeners have made this enterprise a major hobby, with loads of time to devote and enjoy germinating seed for woodland plants. But weekenders like us seldom have the time or wish for that particular challenge. We are left with purchasing plants for the woodland garden. Let's always look for nursery propagated plants. Ones that are well adapted to the light conditions in our particular area.

Those plants that do well in low light (as in a coniferous forest) and acid soil should not be planted under a deciduous tree. Likewise, those that call for a deciduous environment need plenty of light, at least part of the year; locate them under deciduous trees or on the edge of a shady area where they can get some bright light (but not direct). Finally, plants that are native to a *mixed forest* may have their own special peccadillos, you may find one or another under the conifers or the beeches.

A Word Of Caution

Never, under any circumstances, do a large scale turning over of soil in a woodland environment. We are not dealing with an annual flower garden or vegetable garden here; this is a naturalized woodland enclave and cultivating destroys the soil layering and most damaging of all, can destroy the rooting system of your trees. Remember, your trees are the one thing you must keep healthy to *even have* a woodland effect.

Only dig planting holes for shrubs and small plants, but again, do not excavate large areas. Also, don't cut out tree roots over an inch in diameter either. If you must, simply plant elsewhere.

Finally, in way of caution, never install plants of any kind, flowers, shrubs, groundcover in bare ground, like you might in a flower bed. Forest plants always have some loose covering of humus or decaying organic matter over their roots. So you create the same effect. *Always!* You can also use some leaf mold topped with chopped up leaves around newly planted plants.

Let's Place Our Plants Now

It is always best to place woodland plants in loose groups or masses, just as in a traditional flower border - but don't over do it. Be sure too, to locate plants individually or in small groups as you would likely find them in nature. Another good idea is to allow borders of any given mass to be soft and flowing. It looks delightful to encourage creeping ground cover plants to act as "weavers" running beneath the taller plants and 'marrying' different groups together. Tall and medium-height plants naturally push right up through the ground cover plants, so be sure to add these wild weavers to the woodland garden if you are intending to duplicate nature's regular environment.

Remember, it's just fine to have large areas of open ground covered with a natural leaf litter; a mossy log among two groups of plants. These open areas fill in naturally if the plants are well situated.

Paths are a woodland's best buddy. Create a meandering trail through your garden, if you have one that is fairly large in scale. A path prevents plants from getting trampled and keeps the soil compacted. These trails should be kept simple— as if a random deer or two

had crossed into your garden. Don't edge them with rocks or other bordering. Instead use a deep mulch of wood chips or shredded bark to provide a pleasant cushion to walk on.

Ferns Are Lovely Here

Clumps of ferns in strategic places in your woodland garden make up for the lack of ephemerals when springtime is over. They fill in bare places providing greenery and structure after the wildflowers are gone. You can plant them alone offering a colorful and serene feeling. Use several textures too, ranging from finely cut and lacy to coarse and bold. Vary the color as well from a lime green to a blue or dark green.

House Keeping Is A Breeze!

You will find that housekeeping chores with a woodland garden is as easy-as-pie. This naturalistic garden area of your backyard, once your plants have been planted and have become established allows you to simply sit back and enjoy it.

The wildflowers don't need staking, and to prolong the greenery of the ephemerals in spring just water them during any summer drought. Any newly planted shrubs or flowers should be watered regularly, of course but this only needs to be done in the first season you plant them. After that, as long as your local rainfall is sufficient, you're all set!

As I stroll around my woodland garden area I pull the occasional weed or tree seedling, deadhead any unwelcome plant growth and pick up the random fallen twig or branch.

In the fall I check to see which plants look overcrowded, then I dig and divide them in early spring just as new growth appears in the spring. All in all this is the most 'time friendly' part of my whole backyard gardening experience—and it will be the same for you!

An Introduction To Meadow Gardening

In the usual sense, a meadow should be composed of primarily native warm-season grasses—a perennial clump that grows slowly in spring and fall, then thrives in summer, finally going dormant in winter—and flowering annuals, biennials, and perennials that will spread out and seed themselves for a self propagating meadow of flowers and foliage. In real life, however, many meadow gardens never achieve this goal for many different reasons. A natural meadow and the life cycles of plants that compose it usually can give you strong hints on how to create a more natural site on your land.

A meadow is usually defined as an open sunny area of grass and wildflower in a normally forested area where rainfall is high. Wood plants that take root in a meadow will nearly

always shade out the meadow natives. For this reason, a natural meadow can only exist where woody plants are limited or prevented from invading. Alpine meadows are a good example of this, the soil is usually too wet, the growing season too short, and the winter too severe to grow and facilitate shrubs or trees, so the meadow lives on eternally. The vast rolling meadows in my part of the country (Northeast) only exist because some farmer, road crew or other worker has decided to mow back the grasses and growth.

You'll find this will need to happen in your little packet of meadow paradise too!

Most natural meadows have more grass than flowers but we weekenders often care more about the flowers sprouting than the grass. That's not the way to go about constructing a meadow area. Purists, (like me) like to argue that grass is as important an ingredient as the flowers. Meadow grasses stabilize the soil and give support to any flower. They add interest too with color and texture, especially in fall as they change color. Your grasses will unify the wildflowers you do plant and give you a neutral background for those colorful blossoms. So welcome grassy areas and pay as much attention to it as you do your wildflowers.

The natural meadow must occur in full sun. The soil needn't be the richest, and you don't need to fertilize it (unless you have a ton of clay in it) all because meadow plants are not heavy feeders. The real key is taking the time to situate your meadow properly.

Because of its wild, natural order I suggest you limit your meadow area to the rear of your property. Your neighbors will appreciate that, especially if you live in a suburban area. If you're really 'out there' in the country then you needn't be so socially conscious. And whichever you choose, front or back of your property, remember you can always enhance its beauty by creating a walkway that leads to a lovely bench, or you can border your work with a split rail fence to give it a rustic but more appealing appearance.

What About Seed Mixes?

Now that you have chosen the location for your naturalized garden the next step is to choose the seed you wish to plant. Always read the label to see if the seed mix is truly acclimated for your part of the country. It should be a regional mix formulated to grow well where you live. As I've taken pains to remind you only a truly species that are native to your area will promise you the greatest chance at success in your meadow garden.

One great source for making sure the mix you purchase is right for you is the National Wildflower Research Center (200 FM 973 North, Austin, Texas 78725) which was founded by Lady Bird Johnson in 1982. They conduct extensive research but also provide a clearinghouse of wildflower information. They provide many publications, among which are lists of recommended wildflowers for each state, along with commercial seed sources. This is ideal for weekenders in providing information you need quickly.

Many seed mixes contain both annuals and perennials; the annuals bloom the first year, then disappear. But no one will get flustered if you work in some annuals seed each year

to provide some more exciting color to your meadow garden. Meanwhile, the perennials will sprout and put down solid roots and just get situated the first year. They will flower the second year and continue to improve each consecutive year particularly if you mix them with protective grasses.

It's also important that you look for mixes that list proportions of each type of seed. It's best if this proportion listing is broken down by number of each kind rather than by weight.

Good Time Meadow Plants

The following wildflowers and grasses are the most dependable native annuals and perennials for meadows. That means they promise you a good time as a weekend gardener.

Northeast Flowers

Aquilegia canadensis (wild columbine) *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed)
Aster novae-angliae (New England aster) *Baptista australis* (wild blue indigo)
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum (oxeye daisy)
Coreopsis lanceolata (lance-leaved coreopsis)
Dodecatheon meadia (shooting star) *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower)

Northeast Grasses

Andropogon virginicus (broom sedge) *Bouteloua curtipendula* (sideoats grama grass)
Festuca elatior (tall fescue)

Southeast Flowers

Achillea millefolium (yarrow) *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed)
Baptista australis (wild blue indigo) *Chamaecrista fasciculata* (partridge pea)
Coreopsis lanceolata (lance-leaved coreopsis) *C. tinctoria* (calliopsis)
Echinacea purpurea (purple coneflower)

Grasses For The Southeast

Andropogon virginicus (broom sedge) *Festuca cearia* (blue fescue)
Miscanthus floridulus (giant Miscanthus) *M. sinensis* 'Gracillimus' (maiden grass)

Flowers For The Midwest and Southeast

Allium cernuum (nodding pink onion) *Amorpha canescens* (leadplant)
Asclepias tuberosa (butterfly weed) *Aster aureus* (blue aster)
Coreopsis palmata (stiff coreopsis) *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower)
Geum triflorum (prairie smoke) *Helianthus mollis* (hairy sunflower)
Lespedeza capitata (round headed bush cover) *Penstemon* spp. (Penstemon)
Solidago speciosa (showy goldenrod)

Grasses For the Midwest and Southwest

Andropogon gerardii (big bluestem) *Bouteloua curtipendula* (sideoats gamma grass)
B. gracilis (blue gamma grass) *Carex pennsylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge)
Elymus canadensis (Canada wild rye)

Flowers for the Pacific Northwest

Aster novae-angliae (New England aster) *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* (oxeye daisy)
Collinsia heterophylla (Chinese houses) *Epilobium angustifolium* (fireweed)
Helenium autumnale (sneezeweed) *Lupinus desiflorus* (golden lupine)
Oenothera caespitosa (tufted evening primrose) *Stylomecon heterophylla* (wind poppy)

Grasses For the Northwest

Andropogon gerardii (big bluestem) *Festuca elatior* (tall fescue)
F. ovina (sheep fescue) *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem)

Weeds And Your Meadow

Unfortunately, weeds continue to be a problem in a meadow garden as they are in any gardening enterprise. Johnson grass, rag weed, thistles, or bindweed are unsightly and can grow exponentially. Battling weeds begins when you first sow your crop and continues for at least another season or two. Once you have established your meadow garden, you will find that the grasses will provide thick enough vegetation to shade out most weeds. From there on out you'll only have to pull weeds occasionally, the ones that stubbornly persist each year. But rest assured, dear weekender— the major battle is over after your meadow is established.

In the beginning because the soil is cleared it offers an open invitation for airborne seed. If you till the soil the airborne weeds can become particularly difficult to deal with because dormant seed lying too deep to germinate comes to the surface where the air gently spreads it around.

Once the soil is tilled and weeded several times, then and only then should you sow the meadow garden. Do it in either spring or fall. It is essential to sow the seed thickly to further keep out weeds. Once your garden is up and running you can get rid of the occasional weed by hand.

Weekender's Quick Tip

Problem: Shrub borders and beds are weedy.

Quick Fix: Lay down a thick layer of organic mulch to prevent weeds from germinating beneath shrubs and to improve the health of the plants.

Chapter 7: Easy Care Plants for Weekenders



In this chapter I will list some of the proven performers for low-maintenance gardening. They are all tough little guys that still retain their attractiveness while adapting to a range of growing conditions. They all will tolerate a little benign neglect on your part and rarely suffer from diseases and insects. Choose the ones that match your taste and needs (especially the growing conditions in your area) and don't be surprised if some of the most well-known garden plants are not included here. It may have a pest problem, require lots of care or grows in an unwieldy way without staking or pruning. I want to help you avoid these so I have purposefully not listed them.

The ground covers in this chapter are also low-maintenance plants, the shade and ornamental trees were carefully selected to include only those species that are long-living. Only evergreen and flowering shrubs that require little maintenance found their way into the list, as well.

Though flowering annuals often require constant care, only those that flourish with a *minimum of attention* have been included here.

The best woodland wildflowers and hardy ferns for shade gardens are allowed in too. Here you'll find care-free flowers and grasses for a colorful meadow garden.

All in all a very useful chapter that will help you narrow down the choices that best fit your plans constructed up until now. If you've followed me through our journey to the present you are well educated in the opportunities and challenges a backyard paradise affords. Now with Chapter 7 you can mix and match those plants that will make your weekend gardening experience truly stress free and successful.

I have placed all the recommendations in table format for easy reference. First I will give you the plant name (both Latin and English) so you can find what you're looking for as you browse down the list. Across this table a short description of the plant, its maintenance needs and finally some general comments on the plant.

I will start with ground covers, followed in order by small deciduous trees, medium height shade trees, and tall shade trees. Then we will list evergreen trees, deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs, easy care annuals, perennials, and bulbs.

This comprises a virtual encyclopedia of choices you can make for your beautiful, weekend garden. I hope you find it compact and useful

Weekender Groundcover Recommendations

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Aegopodium podagria</i> <i>'Variegatum'</i> Silveredge Goutweed, Silveredge bishop's weed	A deciduous perennial. Toothed, three-part, green with bright white edges. Lacy white flower heads bloom in early summer. Spreads by creeping root stalks.	Good in any type of soil in sun or shade. Very aggressive in rich moist soil, less invasive in poor soil. Cut off faded flowers for best appearance. Space 1 ft. apart. Zones 3- 10	Best planted in mass under trees and shrubs. Control spreading with lawn edging or a curb. Will re- sprout from root pieces left in soil. The all-green form is even weedier.
<i>Ajuga reptans</i> Bugleweed, carpet bugleweed	Semi-evergreen perennial. Shiny, close to ground foliage forms tight low rosettes. Spikes of blue flowers 6 in. tall in mid-spring. Spreads by above ground runners.	Best in rich, moist soil that is well drained in semi- shade. Can tolerate deep shade and full sun. May rot where soil is too wet or in Deep South. Propagate by removing new plants at the end of runners. Space 6 to 12 inches apart. Cut back runners in spring. Mow off spent flowers. Zones 5-8; 5-10 on West Coast.	Excellent fast growing cover for shady spots. Use under trees and shrubs, along walkways and paths, and in flower gardens. 'Bronze Beauty' has purplish leaves and deep blue flowers and light green leaves with some pink and silver.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Asarum canadense</i> Wild ginger	A deciduous perennial. Flowers interesting, 3 petalled, re-brown hidden beneath the leaves. Spreads by creeping rootstocks to form 8-inch high carpets.	Grow in semi-to deep shade in moist, humus filled soil. Propagates by division. Space 1 foot apart. Zones 4-9.	Combine with wildflowers and ferns for texture in a woodland setting. Use evergreens species with shrubs.
<i>Astilbe chinensis</i> 'Pumila' Chinese astilbe	Deciduous perennial foliage green bronze, fernlike. Form 6 inch tall clumps. Flowers dusty pink 12 inch tall plumes. Spreads slowly by underground runners.	Grows best in partial shade in rich, moist soil. Tolerates more dryness than other astibles. Space 1 ft. apart. Zones 5-8.	Best groundcover Astilbe. Use in shade gardens and along garden paths.
<i>Bergenia Cordifolia</i> Heartleaf bergenia	Semi-evergreen perennial. Large, dark green, heart shaped leaves form basal clumps. Foliage turns bronze in fall and winter. Pink or white flowers on 1 ft. tall stalks in early spring. Increases by underground rootstalks.	Grows best in rich, humus soil; tolerates drought and poor soil. Best in partial shade but tolerates sun. Propagate by division. Space plants 2 ft. apart. If foliage looks battered at winters' end, cut it back. Zones 3-10.	Mass plant for contrasting leaf texture with ornamental grasses. Use as focal point in rock or shade garden.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i> Snow-in-summer	Semi-evergreen perennial. Forms mats of narrow silver gray, wooly foliage. Covered with clusters of white flowers from late spring to early summer. Spreads by creeping stems.	Grows best in average to sandy soil in full sun; tolerates light shade. Spreads rapidly as much as 2 ft. a year and may get out of bounds, but easy to pull up. Cut off faded flowers with shears.	Use between paving stones; mow after blooming. Very nice cascading over stone walls. Silver colored foliage combines with all colors.
<i>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides</i> Plumbago, leadwort	Deciduous to semi-evergreen. Woody stems spread across the ground providing dense cover about 1 ft. high. Leaves are glossy green turn red to bronze in fall. Blue flowers bloom over a long period in late summer and early fall; faded flowers drop, leaving nice rusty red calyx. Spreads by underground stems.	Grow in full sun to part shade. Spreads rapidly in rich, moist soil. In colder zones it dies back to ground level and emerges in spring. Cut back to ground level in late winter. Zones 6-10.	A real show off through the fall and into winter. Beautiful groundcover around deciduous shrubs with fall color. Best to plant where there is a lack of greenery is no problem.
<i>Chrysogonum virginianum</i> Goldenstar, green-and-gold.	Deciduous perennial. Triangular, hairy leaves on 4 to 10 inch tall, spreading plants. Small yellow flowers appear from spring through summer. Increases by creeping stems and seedlings.	Grow in partial to full shade in rich soil with good drainage. Tolerates full sun only in very moist soil. Propagates by division every few years. Space 1 ft. apart. Zones 5-9.	A lovely plant to use as a specimen or in mass in wildflower or shade garden, or under shrubs. Blooms in summer only in cool northern areas.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Convallaria majalis</i> Lily-of-the-valley	Deciduous perennial. Two 8-inch tall basal leaves clasp each flower stem. White, bell shaped flowers on one-sided stalks bloom in late spring. Very fragrant.	Grow in partial to full shade in moist, fertile soil. Can become invasive. Foliage looks yellow by late summer and during drought. Apply compost or rotted manure annually in spring to increase flowering. Propagates by division. Zones 3-9.	Plant en masse or in groups under shrubs or in woodland or shade gardens. Locate where unsightly late summer foliage will not be a problem.
<i>Cotoneaster</i> spp. Cotoneasters	Deciduous to evergreen shrub. Many species make useful ground covers. Most feature neat oval leaves on twiggy stems, tiny white or pink flowers in early summer, bright red berries in late summer and fall and orange-red to purple-red fall leaf color.	Grow in full sun in average well-drained soil. Susceptible to fire blight and spider mites. Allen tree leaves catch in twiggy stems and may be time consuming to remove by hand or leaf blower. Increases by long, spreading branches, which may root. Propagate by layering or cuttings. Space 2 to 5 ft. apart. Zones 5-9.	Useful as groundcover on banks and in many sunny areas, as a specimen in rock gardens or as foundation plants. Where fire blight is a problem don't mass plant.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Epimedium</i> spp. Epimediums, barrenworts	Somewhat woody, deciduous perennials. Compound leaves with heart-shaped leaflets on wiry stems. New foliage often light green with touches of red. Sprays of delicate flowers in early to mid-spring. Spreads by underground runners to form dense clumps about 10 inches high.	Prefers partial shade, but grows in full sun if soil is moist. Tolerates drought if shaded. Cut back to ground in late winter. Propagates by division. Zones 3-8.	Looks best in woodland or shade garden. Use as edging along a trail or walkway, or mass-plant under shrubs. Spreads well, but not invasive. Dried foliage may remain showy through much of winter. Features yellow flowers and small leaves.
<i>Hosta</i> spp. Hosta, plantain lily, funkia	Deciduous perennial. Clumps of basal foliage vary from 6 inches to 3 ft. tall. Leaves unusually heavily veined, vary in color from bright green to blue green. Variegated cultivars available. Spikes of lavender white, or purple flowers from mid-summer to fall. Increases by clump size.	Best in rich moist soil, but tolerates drought and poor soil. Grow in partial to full shade. Cut off spent flower stalks, which can look unsightly. Remove frost killed foliage in late fall. Propagate by division. Slugs may be a problem. Zones 4-9.	Usually grows for its wonderful foliage than for its flowers. Use in shade garden, and along woodland paths with ferns.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i> Candytuft, edging candytuft	Evergreen sub shrub. Narrow green leaves on ascending branches from fine textured, 1 ft. tall, sprawling masses. Circular flat-topped clusters cover plants in spring.	Grow in fertile, well-drained soil in full sun or light shade. Shear heavily after blooming to increase plant density. Propagate by cutting or division. Space 1 ft. apart. Zones 4-10.	Use in small scale planting for evergreen color and flowers. Pretty cascading over walls or on slopes. For groundcover use, avoid the lower growing cultivars such as 'Little Gem' or 'Purity'. These work best as edging.
<i>Juniperus</i> spp. Junipers	Evergreen shrubs. Leaves usually sharp pointed, scale like, varies in color from blue-green to bright green on creeping or low spreading branches.	Grows best in full sun in average to well drained soil. Tolerates drought and partial shade. Increases by spreading branches, which may root. Space 2 or more feet apart. Shore juniper zones 6-9; creeping juniper zones 2-10; Japanese garden juniper zones 5-9.	Excellent for erosion control. Nice cascading over walls. Use in foreground of foundation plantings or shrub borders.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Euonymus fortunei</i> Winter creeper	Evergreen vine. Glossy, oval foliage varies in size and color depending on the cultivar and may be variegated or purple tinted. Flowers are not showy. Vines train and climb to 20 ft.	Grow in sun or shade in average to moist soil. Propagate by cuttings or division. Scale insects may be a very serious problem, apply dormant and summer oil sprays. Cut back to prevent climbing too high into trees and buildings. Zones 5-10.	Use as carpeting plant for erosion control on banks. Looks attractive cascading over a wall. Avoid mass planting variegated cultivars because they may look too busy. Use dwarf winter creeper between stepping-stones.
<i>Galium odoratum</i> Sweet woodruff	Semi evergreen to deciduous perennial. Tiny, bright green leaves on 6-8 inches high stems form extensive mats. Small star like white flowers dot the plants in spring. Spreads rapidly by underground runners.	Best in partial to dense shade in rich humus soil. Keep moist but not wet. Prevent from invading lawn with edging. Propagate by division. Space 1 ft. apart. Zones 4-8.	Great ground cover for woodland or shade garden. Combines well with tall spring bulbs and woodland plants. Mass plant under shrubs. Fine texture looks good in small gardens. Spreads less in poor soil.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Hedera helix</i> English Ivy	Evergreen vine. Shiny, dark green leaves with light green veins/ Vines climb and trail to 20 ft., rooting as they go. Flowers form only on the bushy adult.	Best in moist soil in partial to full shade. Full sun in winter can cause leaf burn. Trim back two or three times a year with clippers to keep in bounds. Prevent from climbing high into trees. Propagate by cuttings or division. Space cuttings 6 inches apart. Zones 5-10.	Lovely, fast growing ground covering for shady spots. Good for erosion control on slopes and trailing over walls. Include spring flowering bulbs among the ivy for seasonal color.
<i>Lamium maculatum</i> Spotted dead nettle <i>Lamia strum galeobdolon</i> Yellow archangel, golden dead nettle	Deciduous to evergreen perennials. Toothed, heart shaped, glossy leaves are usually variegated. Trailing to semi-trailing stems to 1 ft. tall.	Grow in full shade to partial sun. Both tolerate drought but perform best in moist rich soil; need more moisture with more sun. Shear off flowers after they fade to encourage bushy growth. Both spread by root stems.	<i>Lamia strum</i> makes the best ground cover for large-scale use because it grows more rapidly than <i>Lamium</i> . Combine <i>Lamium</i> with other ground covers for a tapestry effect. Useful for mass planting under trees and shrubs and under tall perennials.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Laurentia fluviatilis</i> <i>(Isotoma fluviatilis)</i> Blue-star creeper; isotoma	Evergreen perennial. Leaves a ¼ in. long on mat-forming creeping stems. Light blue star-shaped flowers from spring through summer.	Grow in light shade; tolerates full sun if kept constantly moist but not soggy. Best in loose, fast draining soil. Increases by spreading stems. Space 6 inches apart. Zones 7-10.	Tolerates light foot traffic; use as a lawn substitute or between stepping-stones. Makes a fine under planting for shrubs. Big on west coast but will grow on east coast, too.
<i>Liriope muscari</i> Big blue lily turf <i>L. spicata</i> Creeping lily-tuft	Semi-evergreen perennials. Grassy foliage may be dark green or variegated. Spikes of flowers in late summer. <i>L. spicata</i> leaves are ½ inch across and form soft, 9-inch high mounds; flowers remain close to the foliage.	Grow in rich to average, moisture retentive soil in full sun to full shade. Somewhat drought tolerant but needs ample water and sunny locations. Cut back or mow almost to the ground in the late winter.	Mass plant green cultivars as a formal ground cover or in place of lawn; can't withstand foot traffic. <i>L. spicata</i> faster than <i>L. muscari</i> and makes a better ground cover for large-scale plantings.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Mahonia repens</i> Creeping mahonia	Evergreen shrub. Dull bluish-green holly-like leaflets from large compound leaves. Fragrant yellow flowers in spring followed by edible black berries. Grows about 1 ft. high. Spreads by underground stems.	Grow in acid, humus soil in partial to full shade. Tolerates dry soil. Protect from winter sun. Space 2 to 3 ft. apart. Zones 5-9.	Use as a ground cover in woodland setting, beneath high-branched evergreens, or on shady sides of buildings. Native to the Northwest.
<i>Mitchella repens</i> Partridge-berry, twin-berry	Evergreen shrub. Dull bluish-green holly-like leaflets from large compound leaves. Fragrant yellow flowers in spring followed by edible black berries. Grows about 1 ft. high. Spreads by underground stems.	Grow in acid, humus soil in partial to full shade. Tolerates dry soil. Protect from winter sun. Space 2 to 3 ft. apart. Zones 5-9.	Use as a ground cover in woodland setting, beneath high-branched evergreens, or on shady sides of buildings. Native to the Northwest.
<i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i> Mondo grass	Evergreen to semi-evergreen perennial. Forms dense, 8-10 inch tall clumps of grassy, 1/8 inch wide, dark green leaves. Spikes of white flowers bloom in late summer and form blue berries in fall, but remain mostly hidden among the foliage.	Grow in full sun to full shade in good soil; keep moist, especially in full sun conditions. Mow to renew growth and tattered foliage at winters' end. Propagate by division. Space 6-12 inches apart. Slugs may be a problem. Zones 8-10.	A mature planting forms a uniform sea with coarse linear texture. Use instead of lawn grass in front yards and under trees; does not tolerate foot traffic.

Ground Cover Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i> Japanese pachysandra, Japanese spurge	Evergreen perennial. Glossy, toothed, dark-green foliage in whorls on 8-10 inch tall stems. Short spikes of creamy white flowers in early spring. Spreads by underground runners.	Grow in good to average soil in partial to full shade; full shade in south. Drought tolerant but performs best with adequate moisture and in fertile soil. Contain with lawn border or edging. Propagate by division or cuttings. Space 8 inches apart. Zones 8-10.	Pachysandra grows in the dense shade and terribly thin soil beneath surface rooted trees, where little else will grow. Fills in quickly and practically defy weeds. Use 'Silveredge' to brighten shady spots under trees.
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i> var. <i>picta</i> Ribbon grass, gardener's garters	Semi-evergreen, perennial cool-season grass. Flat bright white and green sometimes marked with pink, on stems that grow 1 ½ to 3 ft. tall. Inconspicuous summer flowers. Increase by underground runners.	Grows in full sun to full shade in wet to dry soil. May bleach out in too much sun or be too lanky in shade. Can be invasive, clay soil and shade may slow down growth.	Use as ground cover in small to large area, in mid-ground of ornamental grass gardens, or combined with pastel or white flowers. Useful in wet soil where other plants do poorly.

Weekender Small, Medium & Tall Deciduous Tree Recommendations

Small Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Acer griseum</i> Paperbark maple	<p>Slow growing, upright, round headed, open-branched tree that reaches 20 to 30 ft. Light green leaves toothed and divided into 3 parts. Fall color variable. Bark on trunk and branches rich cinnamon brown, peels into lovely curls.</p>	<p>Grow in full to partial sun in neutral to acid soil of average moisture. Zones 5-7.</p>	<p>Use this stunning tree where it can be enjoyed year round, but especially in winter when the outstanding bark provides color and interest. Use as a patio tree, garden tree, or under story tree.</p>
<i>Cercis Canadensis</i> Redbud	<p>Moderate growing tree with spreading flat topped canopy, reaching 25 ft. Heart shaped medium green leaves 3 to 5 inches wide, and turning yellow in fall. Quantities of small, reddish purple, pea shaped flowers cluster along the branches before the foliage emerges. Pods 3 inches long, in fall.</p>	<p>Grow in partial shade to full sun in moist, well-drained soil. Tolerates acid or alkaline conditions. Canker and verticillium wilt can be serious, but rarely trouble naturalized trees in a woodland garden. Zones 5-9.</p>	<p>Native to the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast. Charming naturalized as an under story tree in a woodland. Makes a nice patio tree or specimen in a mixed border. Flowers are best displayed against a dark background.</p>

Small Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> Fringetree	Slow growing, open round-headed tree. To 20 ft. tall. White fragrant flowers, somewhat larger on male trees, bloom in late spring to early summer. Small purple berries on female trees. Large elliptical leaves turn yellow in fall.	Grow in moist but well drained, slightly acid rich soil in full sun. Berries usually eaten by birds and aren't messy. Plant in area with good air circulation to avoid mildew on foliage. Zones 5-9.	Native to the southern states and enchanting naturalized in woodland. Use as specimen, garden or patio tree. Leaf out in late spring. Prune while young to encourage multiple or single trunk, as desired.
<i>Cornus florida</i> Flowering dogwood	Small, spreading tree with horizontal, layered branches, reaching 20 to 25 ft. tall. Leaves of glossy green with prominent veins, turning red or reddish purple in early fall. Flowers have showy white or pink bracts that last for several weeks. Red berries in fall.	Best in partial shade in fertile, moist, acid soil. Bores attack trees stressed by lawn mower injuries and drought. Fungal diseases collectively called dogwood decline have been killing trees in the Northeast; grow in areas with good air circulation. Zones 5-8.	A lovely native tree. Quite striking when naturalized in woodland, where it may be less susceptible to pests. Use in a mixed border or as a specimen. If your trees succumb to dogwood decline, substitute the more resistant but later blooming <i>c. kousa</i> .

Small Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Cornus kousa</i> Kousa dogwood, Japanese dogwood	<p>Medium sized, often vase shaped tree with horizon branching pattern. Oval green leaves turn brilliant dark red in fall. Long lasting, 2 to 3 inches white blossoms may cover trees for over a month in late spring and early summer. Showy, pinkish red, raspberry like berries, in late summer.</p>	<p>Grow in good soil in full to partial sun. Less susceptible to the insect and disease problems of <i>C. florida</i> and more drought tolerant. Needs another kousa dogwood nearby to produce best fruit show. Prune to encourage single trunk. Zones 5-7.</p>	<p>Use as patio, garden, or under story tree. Weeping forms 'Elizabeth Lustgarten' and 'Lustgarten Weeping' look especially well planted on a hillside or above a wall.</p>
<i>Cornus mas</i> Cornelian cherry	<p>Moderate growing round headed small tree or large shrub, often with multiple trunks. Reaches 20 to 25 ft. Glossy green, 2-4 inch long, oval leaves with prominent veins. Poor fall color. Flowers a misty yellow haze in late winter or early spring. Edible fruit in mid-summer.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun to part shade in fertile well-drained soil. Resistant to usual dogwood pests. Prune off lower branches to reveal handsome bark. Zones 5-8.</p>	<p>One of the earliest plants to bloom. Makes a lovely under story in a woodland garden. Use in mixed border or as an informal hedge or screen. Most effective with a dark background that shows off the blossoms.</p>
<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i> Russian olive	<p>Fast growing tree or shrub to 20 ft. with rounded, open shape. Small, oval silvery green leaves. Fragrant flowers followed by yellow green berries with silver scales. Dark brown shedding bark.</p>	<p>Grow in average soil in full sun. Performs well in dry soil, windy sites, and seashore conditions. Prune to encourage a single trunk. May form root suckers. Zones 3-7.</p>	<p>Useful informal hedge or windbreak, or use as a specimen in a mixed border. Silvery foliage looks good with other gray-leaved plants and contrasts with darker green foliage.</p>

Small Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Halesia Carolina</i> Carolina silverbell	<p>Slow-growing, broad spreading, round headed tree to 25 ft., sometimes 30 to 40 ft. Oval leaves 2 to 5 inches long turn yellow in fall. Delicate, white bell-shaped flowers in clusters dangle along undersides of branches in mid-spring.</p>	<p>Grow in moist, highly organic, acidic soil in full sun or partial shade. Zones 5-9.</p>	<p>Native to the Southeast. Makes an excellent under story in a woodland garden. Use in mixed border or as a patio tree. Looks best with a dark background that shows off flowers, or planted on a hillside where flowering branches can be viewed from below.</p>
<i>Magnolia stellata</i> Star magnolia	<p>Slow growing, often multi-trunked tree or shrub to 20 ft. Oblong leaves 2 to 4 inches long turn yellow in fall. Fragrant, many-petaled, 3-inch flowers cover trees in early spring before leaves emerge. Silver gray bark.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun in loamy soil. Prune to encourage growth of multiple trunks. Late freezes can destroy blossoms; avoid southern exposure, which encourage early frost susceptible flowers. Establish strong branch structure to avoid breaking from winter ice. Zones 5-9.</p>	<p>Use in mixed border, as a specimen, or against a house wall or dark green background, giving it plenty of space. 'Royal Star has very large flowers and is most cold hardy; 'Water lily' is a bushy plant with pink buds opening white.</p>

Small Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Styrax japonicus</i> Japanese snowbell	Moderate growing tree with horizontal branches, wider than tall, reaches 20 to 30 ft. Long pointed dark green leaves turn yellow in fall. Numerous bell shaped flowers dangle along the undersides of the branch in late spring and early summer. Fissured bark.	Grow in moist, acid soil in full sun or partial shade. Remove low growing branches if desired. Zones 6-8 and moderate regions of Zone 9.	A graceful tree, perfect for a patio or mixed border. Plant on a hillside where blossoms can be seen from below.

Medium Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Amelanchier laevis</i> Allegheny serviceberry shadblow	<p>Moderate growing tall shrub or small tree with multiple trunks and an open branching pattern. Reaches 35 to 40 ft. Leaves open red and change to gray green in summer, turning red and yellow in fall. Hazy white flowers in early spring as the leaves emerge. Small red berries in the summer. Bark is ornamental pink gray.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun to partial shade in moist, fertile, acid soil. Susceptible to firelight and rose family insects, but not usually serious in naturalized plantings. Zones 4-8.</p>	<p>Native to the eastern U.S., this shrubby tree works best naturalized in woodland, where its early spring flowers brighten the forest and the summer berries feed birds.</p>
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> European hornbeam, ironwood	<p>Slow growing, round headed tree to 30 ft.; eventually 50 ft. or more. Dark green, oblong, pointy leaves with saw tooth edges turn yellow or orange in fall. Sinewy trunks and branches with smooth gray bark similar to beech trees.</p>	<p>Grow in average soil in full sun; tolerates a wide range of conditions. Good city tree. Zones 5-7.</p>	<p>Excellent lawn tree for shade. Mass plant 'Columnaris' as a windbreak or screen. 'Fastigiata' is vase-shaped. Not columnar.</p>
<i>Cladrastis lutea</i> Yellowwood	<p>Slow growing, round headed tree to 25 ft. Light green compound leaves turn gold and orange in fall. Clusters of pendulous fragrant white flowers in early summer. Smooth gray bark.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun in acid to alkaline soils. Prune in summer, since sap will bleed profusely in late winter and spring. Zones 4-8.</p>	<p>Native to the southern states and effective naturalized in woodland. Use as lawn shade tree alone or in groups. Casts a dense shade and is deep rooted. Does not bloom well when young.</p>

Medium Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Magnolia virginiana</i> Sweet bay	Reaches 10 to 20 ft. in the north and up to 60 ft. in the south. Deciduous in the north, evergreen in the south. Leaves 3 to 5 inches long, glossy green with white undersides. Fragrant 3-inch blossoms appear sparsely from late spring to autumn. Fall fruits with red seeds.	Grow in partial to full shade in acid, moist to wet soil. Susceptible to ice storm damage, but less so than most magnolias. Zones 5-9.	Native to regions along the east and gulf coasts. Excellent naturalized in woodland where evergreen foliage provides winter interest. Good tree in border along shady side of house.

Tall Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Acer saccharum</i> Sugar maple	<p>Moderate growing, round headed to oval tree, to 5 ft. Leaves 5 lobed, medium green in summer, turning brilliant yellow, orange, and red in fall. Greenish yellow haze of flowers before foliage emerges in spring. Bark smooth gray brown when young, becoming deeply furrowed with age.</p>	<p>Grow in good, loamy soil in full sun or light shade. Less tolerant of stress than other maples. May suffer leaf scorch during drought years. Zones 3-7.</p>	<p>Excellent lawn shade tree. Use to create woodland; may be planted as an under story tree that will eventually grow tall enough to become the dominant tree.</p>
<i>Betula nigra</i> 'Heritage' 'Heritage' river birch	<p>Moderate to fast growing tree, reaches 40 to 70 ft. Leaves toothed, arrow headed, 3 inch long, open yellow green, changing to dark green in summer and yellow in fall. Ornamental reddish brown bark peels to lighter patches of salmon and cream on young and middle aged trees.</p>	<p>Grow in moist, acid soil in full sun. Tolerates wet soil. Resistant to bores, which trouble other birches. Cut out older trunks of maturing trees to encourage regrowth with attractive bark. Zones 4-9.</p>	<p>Stunning tree for use in lawn or garden; casts light shade. Locate where it can be appreciated in winter. Be sure to purchase the 'Heritage' cultivar; the species has variable bark characteristics.</p>

Tall Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i> Sweet gum	Moderate to fast growing tree, reaches 60 to 75 ft. high. Leaves are star-shaped emerge pale green mature to glossy dark green, changing to purple, red, yellow, and bronze in fall.	Grow in full sun in moist, acid soil. Fruits are slow to break down and may be a cleanup problem in some situations. Does not tolerate air pollution. Zones 5-9.	Excellent lawn or street tree. Plant in mixed border or woodland so fruits drop where no clean up is needed.
<i>Zelkova serrata</i> Japanese zelkova	Moderate to fast growing, vase shaped tree, reaching 40 to 80 ft. Oval toothed leaves emerge light green and mature to dark green, changing to yellow-orange in fall. Smooth gray bark.	Grow in full sun in moist, rich soil. Tolerates draught and pollution once established. This elm is resistant to Dutch elm disease. Zones 6-9.	Attractive lawn and street tree, suggested as a replacement for American elm. 'Village Green' is fast growing, with a strong upright vase-shape. Zones 5-9.

Weekender Evergreen Tree Recommendations

Evergreen Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Chamae-cyparis lawsoniana</i> Lawson false cypress	Moderate growing with soft, scale like evergreen needles; eventually reaching 100 ft. <i>C. obtuse</i> has a flat, fan shaped sprays of dark green needles. Both have attractive shredding, reddish brown bark.	Grow in full sun in moist, loamy, acid soil. Prefer a cool, humid climate; may get mites in hot climates. Zones 5-8.	Use these large growing evergreens as lawn trees or for screening.
<i>Picea omorika</i> Serbian spruce	Slow growing, narrowly columnar tree with symmetrical pendulous branches. Reaches 20 to 25 ft. after 50 years, 100 ft. with great age. Glossy, dark green needles marked with white. Cones 2 inches long.	Grow in full to partial sun in deep, rich, moist soil. Tolerates both acid and alkaline conditions. Protect from winter wind. Mites may be troublesome in warm climates. Zones 4-8.	The more graceful spruce. Very useful because of its narrow shape; use as a specimen, street tree, or screen.

Evergreen Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Pinus strobes</i> White pine	Fast growing, single trunked tree with open, airy branching. Reaches 50 to 80 ft. over 100 ft. with age. Needles 3-5 inches long, bright green to bluish green. Cones 6-8 inches long.	Grow in well-drained, fertile, acid soil. Tolerates heavy soil and drought once established. Very susceptible to white pine blister rust, but the disease needs nearby wild or cultivated currants as an alternate host to infect pines. Does not tolerate air pollution or road salt. Zones 3-9.	Use as a specimen tree, or plant as a privacy screen or distant background. May be sheared for a formal hedge.
<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i> Podocarpus, yew podocarpus	Slow growing, upright, oval tree; reaches 20 to 35 ft., but may be shorter in colder climates. Needles 1 to 2 inches long, glossy dark green, arranged around stems. Red berry like fruits.	Growing full sun to partial shade in well-drained, fertile soil. Best in shade in the south; protect from winter sun in all climates. Branches may be thinned to restrict size. Zones 8-9.	Use as a specimen tree, or plant as a privacy screen or distant background. May be sheared for a formal hedge.
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> Douglas fir	Very slow growing tree with horizontal branches arranged in whorls. Reaches 20 to 30 ft., 60-90 ft. with great age. Needles 5 inches long dark glossy green, also in whorls.	Grow in fertile, moist, acid soil in full sun. Protect from wind and late afternoon sun in hot climates. Zones 6-7; zone 8 where summers are mild.	Distinctive evergreen with a course texture and very dark foliage. Use as a specimen or in a mixed border, or foundation planting where its eventual size can be accommodated.

Evergreen Tree Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Taxus cuspidate</i> Japanese yew	Slow to moderate growing tree, eventually wide spreading; to 50 ft. tall. Needles 1 inch long, glossy dark green. Red berry like fruits on female plants. Bark is reddish brown.	Grow in full sun or shade in moist, well-drained soil. Cannot tolerate wet soil. Withstands air pollution. Can be pruned by thinning or shearing for hedges or screens. Zone 4-7.	Useful specimen, screen or hedge. Many shrub cultivars available for foundations and hedges. Foliage and berries are poisonous if eaten in quantity.
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i> Eastern hemlock	Fast to moderate growing tree with pendulous horizontal branches and soft outline. Reaches 40 to 70 ft. Flat ½ inch needles, glossy dark green. Cones ½ inch long.	Grow in rich, acid soil in full sun or light shade; shade is best in hot summer areas. Does poorly in dry exposed sites. Mite may become a problem in hot sites. Woolly adelgids are an increasing concern in some areas; can be controlled with dormant and summer oil sprays. Zones 3-7; 8 in cool sites.	A graceful tree. Makes a great specimen, screen or backdrop. Can be pruned into formal and informal hedges.

Weekender Deciduous Shrub Recommendations

Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> Japanese barberry	Moderate growing, dense, round shrubs reaching 3 to 6 ft. tall. Leaves 1 inch long, bright green. Yellow, gold, or scarlet color in the fall. Yellow flowers followed by bright red, long stemmed berries that remain showy into winter. Stems have sharp thorns.	Grow in full sun in average soil; tolerates drought once established. Zones 7-9.	Low growing forms are useful as foundation plants. Those with purple leaves look terrific in mixed borders. Taller growing types make good informal hedges and thorny barriers.
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> Sweet pepper bush	Slow to moderate growing, upright to oval shrub. Sharply toothed, oblong leaves 2 to 4 inches long, dark green changing to yellow or gold in fall. Spires of fragrant white or pale pink flowers in mid to late summer.	Grow in full sun to light shade in moist to wet acid soil (pH 5.0-6.0). May form colonies from suckering roots; do not use in manicured landscapes. Spider mites attack in dry soil. Zones 4-9.	Native to coastal regions in the eastern U.S.; lovely naturalized along a stream or in moist woodland. Works well in a shrub border, too. 'Rosea' has light pink flowers.

Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Euonymous alata</i> Burning bush, winged euonymous	<p>Fast growing, round to spreading shrub with horizontal branches; reaches 15 to 20 ft. high. Branches have ornamental corky wings. Elliptical leaves 1 to 2 inches long emerge yellow green, turn dark green in summer and changes in fall to brilliant red in full sun, bright pink in shade. Yellow flowers, green with new foliage.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun to shade to shade in average, well-drained soil; does not tolerate soggy soil. Rarely infested with scale, which plagues other species. Zones 4-8.</p>	<p>Makes a fine looking informal or formal hedge. 'Compactus' grows to 10 feet tall, but decorative corky wings are less prominent; use for informal hedge or screen because it won't require pruning.</p>
<i>Forsythia intermedia</i> Forsythia	<p>Fast growing, vase shaped shrub, reaching 8 to 10 feet tall. Oval, toothed shaped leaves medium green, turn yellowish in fall. Golden yellow blossoms in early spring line the branches.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun in fertile, moist soil; tolerates a range of conditions. Prune after flowering by cutting out old stems at ground level; do not shear. Zones 5-8.</p>	<p>Use as a specimen or in mass in a shrub border or an informal hedge where there is plenty of room for the arching branches to develop.</p>

Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> Oakleaf hydrangea	Fast growing upright shrub, reaches 6 to 10 feet tall. Leaves oak shaped dark green on top with white fuzz on the undersides, turning deep red, orange or purple in fall. White flowers in upright 4 to 12 inch tall clusters in mid-summer, changing to rose tinted, and finally drying tan. Bark reddish brown and peeling.	Grow in full to partial shade in fertile, heavily mulched, slightly acid soil (pH 6.0 to 7.0). Prune after flowering. Shoots and flower buds may be winter killed in Zones 5 and 6. Remove winter killed branches if needed. Zones 5-9.	Native to the deep south. Wonderful plant for year-round interest in the informal shrub border or woodland garden. 'Snow Queen' has large, dense, pure white flower clusters.
<i>Hypericum prolificum</i> Shrubby St.-John's-wort	Stiff, rounded shrub reaches 4 feet tall. Narrow blue-green leaves 1-3 inches long without good fall color. Yellow 2 inch, buttercup shaped flowers all summer. Reddish brown, peeling bark.	Grow in full sun or partial shade in average to poor soil; tolerates drought and alkaline soil. Remove deadwood in spring if needed after harsh winters in colder zones. Zones 4-8.	Colorful small shrub for specimen or mass planting in mixed borders and foundation plantings.

Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Kerria japonica</i> Japanese kerria	Upright, arching plant, reaches 3 to 6 feet. Long, pointed bright green leaves with toothed margins. Bright, yellow, buttercup like flowers (1 ½ inches long) in mid-spring. Stems and branches are bright yellow-green in winter.	Grow in well-drained moist soil in full to partial shade. Deadwood may need removal every year; thin every few years after flowering to keep compact. May grow very fast in fertile soil and send up suckers. Zones 5-9.	Very nice plant in the mixed border or shady shrub border. 'Variegata' has single yellow flowers and leaves variegated with white; makes an airy mound that brightens shady spots; remove all green sprouts.
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> Shrubby cinquefoil	Slow growing rounded spreading shrub, 2 to 4 feet tall. Dark green, silky oblong ½ to 1 inch long leaflets arranged on compound leaves. Yellow 3-inch flowers borne prolifically in early summer, right through fall. Peeling brown bark.	Grow in full sun to partial shade. Best in fertile, moist soil but extremely tolerant of dry, wet, and alkaline soils and road salts. Zones 2-7 or 8.	Perfect for a fine textured mass planting in border or as a specimen in a small scale garden. Useful in front of taller evergreen shrubs in a foundation planting. Performs well in difficult sites.
<i>Rhododendron mucronulatum</i> Korean rhododendron	Slow growing, upright shrub, to 4 to 8 feet tall. Leaves lance shaped, 1 to 4 inches long, soft green changing to bronze red in fall. Lavender-pink flowers in early spring before the foliage emerges.	Grow in partial shade in fertile, humus rich acid soil. Best sited with an eastern exposure to avoid early flowering. Susceptible to late frosts. Zones 4-8.	Lovely as a specimen or massed in the shrub border, especially with a dark background. 'Cornell Pink' has bright pink flowers.

Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Syringa meyeri</i> Meyer lilac	Slow growing, mounded shrub, reaches 4 to 6 feet tall. Oval leaves rich green, 1-2 inches long. Purple, fragrant flowers cover the plant in late spring after common lilacs bloom.	Grow in full sun in average soil. Rarely needs pruning. Resistant to powdery mildew that infects other lilacs. Zones 4-7.	More fine textured and compact than common lilac. Use in mixed border or foundation planting, or mass-plant as a border or screen.
<i>Viburnum carlesii</i> Koreanspice viburnum	Slow growing, round shrub, reaches 5 to 8 feet tall. Gray green leaves, 2-4 inches long with reddish fall color. Highly fragrant white flowers in round clusters with pink buds.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in moist, fertile soil. Occasionally troubled by mildew or leaf spot, but not seriously. Zones 4-8.	Lovely as specimen or in shrub border.
<i>Weigela florida</i> Weigela	Fast growing, rounded or vase like shaped shrub with arching branches. Reaches 6 to 9 feet tall. Oval, medium-green leaves with long points 2-4 inches long; unspectacular fall color. Funnel shaped pink, rose or white flowers in late spring and early summer.	Grow in full sun in well-drained soil. Thin out oldest stems at ground level every few years after flowering. Zones 5-9.	Makes a lovely informal hedge or screen that will need little pruning. Use as a specimen in a large-scale shrub border. Many cultivars, some with variegated foliage.

Weekender Evergreen Shrub Recommendations

Evergreen Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Buxus micropylla</i> Littleleaf boxwood	Slow growing, dense, rounded shrub, reaches 3 to 4 feet tall. Broadleaf evergreen. Glossy dark green, oval leaves are ½ to 1 inch long; may turn brown green in winter. Fragrant flowers not showy.	Grow in full sun to light shade in moist, well-drained, heavily mulched soil. Shade from winter sun in north. Does not tolerate road salt. Zones 6-8.	An easy choice in most landscape situations. Useful as an informal or formal hedge. Use as a background to a perennial garden or in a foundation planting.
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i> Sasanqua camellia	Slow growing shrub reaches 6 to 10 feet tall. Broadleaf evergreen. Glossy, dark green, oval leaves, 2-4 inches long with hairy undersides. Solitary flowers, 2-3 inches wide, are pink, white, red or bi-colored, bloom in early winter. May be single or double.	Grow in moist, humus rich, acid soil. Needs full sun during the growing season, but provide light shade in winter in Zone 7. Remove faded flowers throughout the bloom period for best appearance. Zones 7-9.	Use in mixed border or foundation planting. Grows less tall and is more open in <i>C. japonica</i> , which grows to 15 to 20 feet tall and will need pruning in most situations. Cultivars abound.
<i>Daphne cneorum</i> Garland flower; rose daphne	Slow growing, rounded mound, reaches 1 foot tall and twice as wide. Broadleaf evergreen. Leaves 1 inch long, dark green year round. Masses of rosy pink, very fragrant flowers bloom in spring and again in late summer. Yellow berries.	Grow in light shade in well-drained, heavily mulched, moist soil. Prune first after flowering. Protect from winter sun. Does not transplant well; plant in permanent location. Zones 4-7.	Wonderful in the mixed border or a foundation planting, especially where it can be seen in winter.

Evergreen Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Ilex crenata</i> Japanese holly	Slow growing, rounded shrub, reaches 5 to 10 feet tall. Broadleaf evergreen. Leaves oval ½ inch to 1-inch long, glossy dark green all year. Flowers and fruit are inconspicuous.	Grow in full sun or shade in moist, well-drained, acid soil. Shade is best in hot summer climates to ward off mites. Zones 6-9.	Use as an informal or formal hedge, as a background for a perennial border. Dwarf cultivars work well in a mixed border or foundation planting.
<i>Ilex glabra</i> Inkberry	Slow growing shrub; reaches 6 to 8 feet tall. Broadleaf evergreen. Dark green, lustrous leaves to 2 inches. Black berries in fall.	Grow in full sun or shade in moist, acid soil. Tolerates seashore conditions and road salt. Zones 5-9.	Native to the east coast. Useful as an informal or formal evergreen screen or hedge. 'Compacta' is a female clone to 4 feet; use in foundation or border planting.
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i> Mountain laurel	Slow growing shrub, reaches 8 to 15 feet tall. Broadleaf evergreen. Elliptical, 2-5 inch long, glossy green, dark leaves. Flowers in 4-6 inch clusters, with buds often dark pink opening to pale pink or white. Blooms in late spring or early summer.	Grow in full sun to deep shade in moist, humus rich, acid soil. Blooms best in sun. Mulch well to keep soil cool, especially in hotter climates. Zones 5-9.	Native to mountainous regions of east coast. Naturalize in woodland or use in naturalistic landscapes. Performs well in shrub borders, shade gardens, and mixed borders when given enough room. Named cultivars usually have vivid flower color.

Evergreen Shrub Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Pinus mugo</i> Mugho pine	<p>Slow growing shrub reaches 3 to 16 feet and twice as wide. Needle leaf evergreen. Tufts of medium green needles on ascending branches. Scaly, brownish, gray bark. Cones 1 ½ inches long.</p>	<p>Grow in full sun to partial shade in moist, fertile, well-drained soil. Usually trouble free, but scale and sawfly may occasionally become serious. Zones 3-7.</p>	<p>Use in foundation plantings or mixed borders. Seedling grown plants of <i>P. mugo</i> can vary in ultimate height. To assure dwarf habit, choose named cultivars like 'Compactus', which form dense 2 feet tall globe in 20 years.</p>
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i> Rosebay	<p>Fast growing, broadleaf evergreen shrub reaches 12 to 30 feet tall. Leathery leaves 5-20 inches long. Flowers rose pink or purple-pink borne in small clusters in mid-summer.</p>	<p>Grow in partial to full shade in moist, well-drained, humus rich acid soil. Keep moist. Mulch heavily. Deadhead to improve next year's flowers. Zones 4-8.</p>	<p>Native to open woodlands of eastern U.S. Useful large-scale evergreen for background plantings and woodland gardens.</p>

Weekender Annuals Recommendations

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Browallia speciosa</i> Browallia sapphire flower	Fine textured, graceful trailing plant, 10 to 18 inches tall. Flowers 2 inch stars in lavender-blue, violet, purple or white.	Plant out in early summer. Space 6 to 10 inches apart in fertile, well-drained soil in partial to light shade. Tolerates full sun in constantly moist or damp soil. Does not need deadheading. Will self-sow in warm climates.	Lovely mass planted in shady spot under trees or shrubs as long as soil remains cool and moist. 'White Bell' is compact and bushy with ice white flowers.
<i>Calendula officinalis</i> Calendula, pod marigold	Upright, full branched plants. Tall cultivars reach 24 inches tall; dwarf cultivars, 10 to 12 inches. Fluffy chrysanthemum-like flowers, 3 to 4 inches across are gold, orange, apricot or ivory.	Grow in full sun in rich, well drained, moist soil. Space 12 to 16 inches apart. Prefers cool climates and tolerates frost. Will self-sow easily. Mildew can be a problem; do not wet foliage. Grow in winter in hot climates.	Tall cultivars make attractive long lasting cut flowers. Use tall cultivars in an herb garden, cottage garden, or informal flower border.
<i>Catharanthus roseus</i> Madagascar periwinkle	Upright, growing to 2 feet tall and spreading 2 feet wide. Glossy green, oval leaves. Flowers pink, mauve, or white with red eyes to 1-½ inches across. They bloom lightly all summer	Grow in full sun or partial shade in evenly moist soil after danger of frost is past. Space 1 foot apart. Does not need deadheading. Tolerates drought. Thrives in heat and humidity. Will self-sow.	A plant that can be used for a summer long groundcover. Plant in sunny border.

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Centaurea cineraria</i> Dusty miller	Forms mounded or upright plants, 12 to 18 inches tall. Grown for the deeply lobed foliage, which is densely covered with felt-like, silvery white hairs. Yellow flowers not particularly showy.	Grow in full sun in sandy, well-drained soil. Space 10 to 12 inches apart. Cut off flower stalks as they form. Cut back over wintered plants or take cuttings.	Plant in mass between flowering perennials or annuals in formal or informal borders. Combines beautifully with pastel or brightly colored flowers. Long lasting foliage when cut.
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i> Cornflower; bachelors' button	Upright plant, 1 to 3 feet tall. Fringed, 1 ½ inch flowers of true blue, pink, or mauve bloom most during cool weather.	Grow in full sun in average to fertile soil. Tolerates poor soil. Prefers cool climates; heat reduces flowering. Space 1 foot apart. Deadhead to prolong bloom. Tall plants may flop unless supported by other plants. Self-sows readily.	Charming flower for cottage gardens or informal flower beds. Naturalized throughout the U.S.; looks at home in a meadow garden. Flowers last well when cut.
<i>Cleome hasslerama</i> Cleome, spiderflower	Fast growing to 3 to 5 feet tall. Large, airy, pink, rose, or white flower heads with long showy stamens bloom all summer as the stems elongate. Attractive compound leaves have 3 to 7 leaflets. Stems have short, sharp spines.	Grow in full sun in average, well-drained soil. Space 2 feet apart. Tolerates poor soil and some drought. Thrives in heat. Self-sows easily.	Tall plant for the back of a flower border or for a cottage garden. Flowers are long lasting when cut with a strong scent.

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i> Cosmos	Daisy like, 4-inch rose, pink burgundy or white flowers with yellow centers bloom from summer to first frost. Lacy foliage. Tall cultivars reach 5 feet; dwarf to 2 feet.	Grow in full sun in average soil; will not bloom in highly fertile soil. Space 1 foot apart. Tolerates drought and heat. Remove faded flowers for best appearance. Self sows easily.	Make wonderful cut flowers. Enchanting in cottage garden; use in the back of the garden against a fence. 'Gloria' is a rose-carmine darkening toward the center toward 4 feet.
<i>Helianthus annuus</i> Common sunflower	Upright plant to 12 feet tall cultivars, 3 feet for dwarfs. Single flowers up to 1 foot across have yellow, gold, or mahogany petals surrounding large dark centers, which contain edible seeds when they mature. Double flowers are pompon shaped.	Grow in full sun in fertile, loamy soil for best flowers. Sow seeds after all frost danger has passed. Space 2 feet apart. Thrives in heat and tolerates drought and alkaline soil. Tall sunflowers may need staking, but lower cultivars are carefree.	Nostalgic plants for a cottage garden or cutting garden. Line up along a fence.
<i>Impatiens wallerana</i> Impatiens, busy lizzie	Mounded plants with neat foliage; covered with flowers from summer until frost. Flat 2 inch short spurred flowers in all shades of pink, red, violet, purple, orange and white tubular flowers. Reaching 8 to 18 inches tall.	Grow in light to full shade in moist, fertile, humus soil. Space 8 to 15 inches apart, depending on height. Tolerates full to partial sun if kept well watered. Needs no deadheading. Will self-sow, but seedling differ from parents. Nicely trouble free.	Mass plant in groups of single colors in shade gardens or for season long color in a mixed border. Select for color and desired height.

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Lobularia maritime</i> Sweet alyssum	Clusters of tiny, honey scented, white, violet or rose flowers cover the low, fine textured plant. Reach 3-6 inches tall and spreads 1 to 15 inches.	Grow in full sun or partial shade in average well-drained soil. Flowers best during cool weather. Does not need deadheading, but shearing back once during hot weather will help produce more blooms.	Mass plant as a ground cover beneath taller flowers between stepping-stones. Use as formal edging along flowerbeds.
<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i> Forget me not	Upright, to 2 feet tall; stems tipped with a coiled cluster of small blue flowers with yellow eyes. Cultivars may be pink or white.	Grow in light shade in moist or wet soil. Sow seeds in summer for bloom the next spring. Dies after flowering and going to seed in early summer. Re-seeds easily.	Use as a nice under planting for spring bulbs, or with early perennials in a mixed border or cottage garden.
<i>Nierembergia hippomanica</i> Cupflower	Small, cup shaped, violet blue, white or purple flowers cover mounds of needle foliage all summer.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in fertile, well-drained soil. Space 6-12 inches apart after danger of frost is over. Keep moist. Perennial in zones 9-11.	Neat plant for the foreground of a flower garden or used as an edging.

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Torenia fournieri</i> Wishbone flower	Upright plant reaches 8 to 12 inches tall with an equal spread. Profuse, dark purple, tubular, 2-lipped flowers with white centers and yellow throats that bloom all summer.	Grow in partial to full shade in fertile, humus soil. Space 8 inches apart after frost threat is past. Tolerates damp soil. Self-sows easily.	Ideal for mass planting in damp shade. 'Clown Mix' has compact 6 inch mounds with 1 inch flowers in a mix of cool colors.
<i>Tropaeolum majus</i> Garden nasturtium	Trailing plant with lotus shaped, blue-green foliage. Long stemmed, spurred flowers, 2-3 inches wide, in gold, orange, red, or cream; flowers may hide beneath the foliage in older varieties. Dwarf, non-trailing cultivars exist, too.	Grow in full sun in average to poor soil. Sow seeds as soon as the soil can be worked in spring. Thin to 1 foot apart. Tolerates drought and poor soil. Flowers are best in cool weather. Self-sows easily.	The flowers and leaves are edible.
<i>Viola cornuta</i> Viola, tufted pansy	Plant reaches 6-8 inches tall. Flat, 2-3 inch flowers with 5 overlapping petals and yellow eyes bloom during cool weather in spring and summer. Colors include blue, purple, lavender, yellow, orange, rose, apricot and creamy white.	Grow in full sun or partial shade in rich, well-drained soil. Prefers cool weather. Tolerates light frost. Remove faded flowers to prolong bloom. Pull out plants when they cease blooming. May be biennial, so you can sometimes just cut back existing plants.	Combine with spring bulbs in a mixed border or cut flower garden. Great to edge a walk in a cottage garden. Combine with other plants that will fill in after the pansies are overwhelmed by any heat.

Annuals Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Viola tricolor</i> Johnny-jump-up	Slender, 1 foot tall plant topped with small purple-yellow and white pansy like flowers in spring	Grow in full sun or partial shade in rich, well-drained soil. Prefers cool weather. Tolerates frost. Pull out plants when they stop blooming or if they are in an easy to reach spot, leave to bloom in fall. Self-sows easily.	Nice for naturalizing in a meadow or cottage garden. Allow weaving between other plants so it can self-sow anytime. Combines well with spring flowering bulbs.

Weekender Perennial Recommendations

Perennial Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Achillea filipendulina</i> Fernleaf yarrow	Summer blooming. Flat clusters of golden, 5-inch flower heads produced for many weeks. Deeply cut green foliage. Stems reach 3 to 5 feet tall.	Grow in full sun in average soil. Space 1 ½ to 2 feet apart. Tolerates drought, heat, and poor soil. Grows leggy and may need staking in fertile, moist soil. Zones 3-9.	Looks good in mid ground or background of perennial border, or mass planted with ornamental grasses.
<i>Aconitum napellus</i> Common monkshood, helmet flower	Summer to late summer blooming. Violet-blue 1 to 2 inch helmet shaped flowers in tall spikes. Finely divided green leaves on 3 to 4 foot tall stalks.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in moist, humus soil. Space 1 to 1 ½ feet apart. Does not perform well in heat and humidity; prefers cool nights. Staking may be needed in shade. Zones 3-7 and cool parts of 8.	Nice late blooming plant for perennial border and cottage garden. Very poisonous. 'Bicolor' grows 3 to 4 feet tall with blue and white flowers.
<i>Alchemilla mollis</i> Lady's mantle	Spring blooming. Misty clusters of tiny yellow-green blossoms held well above foliage. Leaves velvet olive green with scalloped edges. Forms loose 1 foot tall clumps.	Grow in sun to light shade in moist, humus rich soil. Best if kept moist, but tolerates drought. Zones 4-7.	Lovely in flower, but more valued for its foliage, which is a delight in a shade garden. Also use to edge paths.

Perennial Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i> Willow amsonia, blue star	Early summer bloom. Star shaped, pale blue flowers clustered at the tops of stems. Leaves are willow-like, glossy green; turn a brilliant golden yellow in fall.	Grow in full sun to light shade in moist, loamy soil. Stems may need cutting back in the shade and they will re-grow. Zones 3-9.	Attractive but not overwhelming. Old fashioned plant for the flower border. Great fall color.
<i>Anemone sylvestris</i> Snowdrop anemone	Spring blooming. White, 5 petaled flowers with yellow centers. Flower stalks rise well above mound of light green leaves. Reaches 10 to 18 inches tall.	Grow in partial shade in light soil. May spread from underground roots if well-sited, unwanted plants easily removed. Zones 4-8.	Nice spring bloomer for shade garden or naturalistic setting.
<i>Baptista australis</i> Baptista, blue false indigo	Early summer bloom. Indigo blue, two lipped tubular 1-inch flower. Blue-green round leaflets like pea plants on upright stems.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in rich, moist, acid soil. Space 4 feet apart. Plant spreads slowly in large clumps that do not need dividing unless they take up too much room. Zones 3-9.	An old-fashioned perennial that looks at home in a formal or informal perennial garden.

Perennial Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Dianthus deltoids</i> Maiden pink	Summer bloom. Grassy, 4-6 inch tall leaves on prostrate stems form dense mats. Rose, red, pink, or white 3-4 inch wide flowers with notched petals and a contrasting band of spots.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in fertile alkaline soil. Does not need deadheading, but after the major flowers end, shear back for further bloom. Zones 3-9.	Spreads rapidly and makes a good groundcover. Use in foreground or perennial border, in a rock garden, or between paving stones.
<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i> Bleeding heart	Early and mid-spring bloom. Heart shaped pink and white flowers form the undersides of long arching stems. Foliage is blue-green and cut into lacy segments forming clumps 2 to 3 feet tall.	Grow in partial shade in moist, humus soil. Space 2 feet apart. Dies back to ground mid-summer remains longer in cooler climates. Zones 2-9.	Emerges rapidly in spring and blooms along with spring bulbs. Use as specimen for shade garden or shady perennial bed.
<i>Hemerocallis</i> Daylilies	Late spring, summer and fall bloomers. Long, arching, strap-shaped foliage forms grassy clumps ranging in height from 8 to 36 inches, depending on the cultivar. Large funnel-shaped flowers, to 6 inches wide, bloom only one day each, but abundant flowers provide a long bloom period. Flowers in every shade.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in fertile, well-drained soil for best results. Space 2 feet apart. Tough and durable, tolerant of drought, poor soil and shade. Needs no staking. Cut off flower stalks after bloom. Zones 3-9.	Long blooming plant for almost any situation. Especially formal and informal perennial gardens, as a tall ground cover for erosion control. Mass planted with ornamental grasses.

Perennial Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Iris ensata</i> Japanese iris	Summer bloom. Huge, flat, butterfly-like blossoms in white, purple, blue, or lavender with contrasting color, veined. Upright clumps of grassy green foliage reach 2 to 3 feet tall.	Grow in full sun to bright shade in moist or wet, fertile, humus rich, acid soil. Tolerates standing water. Do not allow drying out, especially while in bloom. Zones 5-10.	Ideal for perennial border or for naturalizing along a pond or stream. Numerous cultivars available.
<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i> Russian Sage	Mid to late summer blooming woody perennial or sub shrub. Lavender-blue flowers in airy, branched clusters on top stems. Leaves silver-gray and lanced shaped. Reaches 3 to 5 feet tall.	Grow in full sun in well-drained, average to poor soil. Space 2 feet apart. Drought tolerant. Cut back to 1 to 1 ½ feet in spring before new growth begins. Zones 5-9.	Fine textured gray contrast in large scale mixed or perennial border.
<i>Sedum spectabile</i> Showy stonecrop	Late summer and fall bloom. Showy clusters of tiny flowers, pale green in bud and opening pink, form dense heads above the foliage. Succulent green leaves surround stiff stems, upright clumps 1 ½ to 2 feet tall.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in well-drained, average soil. Needs full sun in the south or the plants grow too tall. Space 1 ½ feet apart. Zones 3-10.	Best in perennial border or rock garden. Favorites for mass planting.

Weekender Bulb Recommendations

Bulb Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Chionodoxa luciliae</i> Glory-of-the-snow	Early spring bloom. Stalks of several 1 inch wide, bright blue flowers with white eyes rise above the strap-shaped foliage. Grows about 4 to 6 inches tall.	Grow in sunny spot in well-drained soil. Plant 3 inches deep and 4 inches apart. Spreads and self-sows. Zones 4-9.	Plant in large groups. Foliage dies down in summer.
<i>Colchicum autumnale</i> Autumn crocus, Meadow saffron	Fall flowering corm. Large 4-inch long, vase-shaped violet, lilac, pink or white flowers emerge directly from the bare ground. Each corm produces several flowers. Bright green leaves 8 to 10 inches long emerge in spring and persist until mid-summer.	Grow in full sun in fertile, well-drained soil. Plant corms in late summer for fall bloom, spacing them 3-4 inches deep and 10-12 inches apart. Zones 5-8.	Looks best planted in a ground cover, which forms a backdrop for the bare stemmed flowers.
<i>Crocus</i> spp. Crocuses	Early spring or fall blooming corm. Vase-shaped flowers with yellow stamens bloom many to a corm. Dark green, grass-like foliage often has white stripe down the center.	Grow in full sun or light shade in well drained to dry soil. Plant corms 3 inches deep and 3-6 inches apart. Performs poorly in heavy or wet soil. Zones 5-9.	Mass plant for best look under a deciduous tree or shrub. Perennial gardens may be too moist for success. Nice in cluster in a rock garden.

Bulb Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Leucojaum aestivum</i> Summer snowflake	Spring bloom. Clusters of bell-shaped white flowers have petals with green on the tips. Foliage is dark green and strap-shaped; to 1 1.2 feet long.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in moist soil. Plant 3-5 inches deep and 4 inches apart. Bulbs may increase and self-sow in right site.	Plant along a walkway or where they can be viewed from a window, early blossoms in spring will lift your spirits! Well suited for mixed borders.
<i>Lilium</i> spp. Lilies	Early summer to fall bloom. Numerous species and hybrids make lilies very diverse. Fragrant flowers. Many shapes from nodding, upright and trumpet, star or bowled. Range in height from 1 to 7 feet. Every color except blue.	Grow in full sun to light shade in fertile, humus, moist but well drained soil. Plant at a depth that is 2-3 times the diameter of the bulb and 1 foot apart. Zones 4-9.	You really must have these in a perennial or mixed border. Nicely fit in the mid-ground or background planted in groups of three bulbs. Place in a cut garden too, so you can have them indoors to enjoy.
<i>Narcissus</i> Daffodils, jonquils, and narcissi	Spring flower with a trumpet-shaped corolla and petal-like rounded perianth; double or single. Leaves usually 12-20 inches long.	Grow in full sun to partial shade in fertile, humus, and well-drained soil. Plant 3 times deeper than the diameter of the bulb. Foliage dies back in mid-summer. Zones 4-9.	Most grow well mass planted in natural landscapes, especially smaller flower types. Also in a border.

Bulb Plant Name	Description	Maintenance	Comments
<i>Tulipa</i> spp. Tulips	Spring flowering bulb. Hybrids are elegant with a single large flower at the top of a sturdy stem with several large basil leaves. In every color but blue, can come in bi-colors and streaked.	Grow in full sun in well-drained, fertile soil. Plant at depth 3 times the width of bulb and 6 inches apart. Zones 2-8.	Plant in cutting garden and remove them after flowers are cut for indoors. Nice when treated as annuals in a mixed border. Try plantings in masses in a single color.
<i>Rosa</i> 'The Fairy', The fairy rose	Polyantha hybrid rose. Clusters of tiny, pink, double blossoms from spring to early frost. New canes emerge, and then arch over to form a 5-foot mound without pruning.	Grow in full sun to light shade in moist, fertile soil. Tolerates poor soil and drought. Very insect and disease resistant. Zones 5-9.	Great in a strong hedge or screen, or as a specimen in a mixed border or cottage garden.
<i>Rosa</i> 'Simplicity' 'Simplicity' rose	Clusters of bright, clear pink flowers bloom from early summer until frost. Dark green, bold foliage. Upright plants reach 5 feet tall without pruning.	Grow in full sun in moist, fertile soil. Prune out deadwood in winter but otherwise needs no pruning. Susceptible to black spot in some sites, but generally pest free. Zones 5-9.	Great as a flowering hedge or screen. Use as a specimen in a mixed garden or cottage garden.

This chapter has attempted to give you an overview of readily available plants that you can use for a carefree weekend garden. However, it is not exhaustive, and should you wish for a more complete listing visit your local garden club, library, or horticultural society. They can guide you to many fine plant directories currently available on the market.

Now let's take a look at the tools and techniques that will be helpful to you in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Matching The Tool and Task In Your Weekend Garden

Don't Take Your Tools For Granted



As a fellow weekender you'll be happy to know there are many tools and techniques

you can employ to save hours of labor and virtually assure you experience little or no frustration. It's important not to take your tools for granted, and do invest in the best you can afford. The better made tools last longer and will ultimately save you money.

Power tools exist for nearly every gardening chore you can come across, I think my old neighbor Fred had them all! But these loud, environmentally unfriendly power tools don't always do a better job than your sturdy hand tool can. I for one think it's rather ironic that some gardeners can love the earth enough to spend hours tending to her, and yet expend tons of fossil fuels to power these mechanical marvels. The power mad might not like me saying this but now that you've learned many ways to create a maintenance free garden, you really don't need all that 'extra' help these gizmos promise.

However, in the following list I haven't totally left out the power tools. Where I have found them particularly effective they are listed alongside my favorite hand tools. There is discussion of techniques that you will find of interest too.

Dig In and Plant With These Tools

Digging, preparing beds, planting, and lifting are intensive tasks that can wear you down pretty quickly, especially if you're not in the best of shape. These tools cut down the amount of physical effort you need to expend to be successful. While some gardeners use one tool for many different jobs, others prefer to match the job to be done with a tool that is particularly helpful to that task.

Spades. This traditional English digging tool has a flat, rectangular blade attached at an angle to a short handle. You can put your weight behind the tool while you push the blade straight into the ground for digging. The handle should be sturdy enough to hold your weight with a short handle which allows to lift the blade from the ground with ease. If you're over 6 ft. tall you can find spades of longer length (30 to 32 inches) that will be easier on your back.

Heavy gauge steel is recommended of solid socket or sold-strap design. Try to get the lightest one you can afford which meets these strength requirements.

Shovels. Designed for scooping and lifting the shovel has a rounded head with a pointed

end. It is attached at an angle to a long handle providing good leverage for moving dirt, gravel, sand and soil. Americans enjoy shovels and they make the best in the world. Quality shovels have a blade and shank created from a single piece of high-carbon, heat tempered steel. This makes it stronger than a single socket type.

Crowbars. When you need to pry up rocks or heavy root balls use a crow bar instead of your shovel. Prying could easily break a shovel handle, or at least break your hind parts from the strain. It's just not designed for this kind of effort. The crowbar, on the other hand, is tailor made for prying up heavy objects.

Mattocks. This digging tool can be used for difficult soil types like rocky, hard-baked clay. It resembles a thick axe head and will cut large roots. The other end is more like a hoe and will chop into and pull up the soil. Since you must swing the mattock over your head, please use caution. If you swing too loosely or with too much force it may get unwieldy pretty fast and cause you irreparable harm.

Forks. When you need to lift and loosen, or turn over soil, a fork does the job. It won't do much digging for you, but it will do splendidly in raising potatoes and bulbs of all kinds. There are many types of forks with different numbers of tines and shapes. Whichever you choose make sure it's sturdy especially in the handle because the tines take so much stress they must also be of top quality. Fine tempered steel and solid socket construction with tines that spring back a bit when a stone gets caught between them is ideal.

English garden fork. This square-tined fork loosens and serrates soil. It's sturdy, sharp pointed tines penetrate the soil easily. Use it to loosen double dug soil in spring without turning it over. Just push it into the soil with your foot, then rock it back and forth to open up the soil. You can find it useful when dividing perennials, too. It will also cause less root damage than the American, or flat tined fork.

Spading fork. This specialized fork tool is used to turn and lift new soil, as opposed to simply stabbing and loosening it. It has broader tines which allow more surface and lifting of clods of soil.

Compost fork. This fork hoists wood chips, manure, or compost from one pile to another or to a wheelbarrow and is much lighter than a shovel. In turning compost it can move across coarse material which won't fall between the tines. Its numerous curved tines are longer, thinner and more widely spaced than a spading fork. The tines are more like a shovel blade in their angle and you should find one that has a handle that is longer than a garden fork allowing better leverage and lifting.

Pitchfork. This is lighter than a compost fork and with only three or four tines it works for lightweight, coarsely textured materials like straw. Its saving grace is that it will always save your strength for these lighter jobs.

Garden rakes. This tool helps you put finishing touches on your gardening work. The comb-like steel rakes are short, straight teeth that can make a new bed or prepare an old one for new annuals or other crops. After loosening or turning over the soil with a fork,

the rake levels it out and removes any left over debris. Snag loose weeds, roots, stones and clods. You can also spread fertilizer and lime with the rake.

Trowels. Mostly used for planting seedlings and small plants, the trowel is a hand tool and you must kneel or sit to use it while working. They are indispensable and don't be surprised if you go through several of them over the years. Their narrow blades come in different shapes. The very narrow, often called transplanting trowels, are for small seedlings or tiny bulbs; those with wider blades are multi-purpose. Choose yours for balance and comfort. Hold it in your hand and imagine it is an ice pick; with your knuckles wrapped around the back of the handle jab it into the soil to make a planting hole.

Bulb planters. A cylindrical digging tool is great for planting individual bulbs, like daffodils and tulips. The blade punches out a circle of earth as you jam it into the ground. You then insert the bulb and knock the soil back in to cover. Remember, for smaller bulbs all you need is the trowel.

Power Tillers

Power tillers help to prepare beds, work in soil amendments, till in weeds and cover crops. Most weekenders' won't need these amazing workers though. The one thing I hope you've gotten in reading this book through is that when you do permanent planting of shrubs, flowering perennials, groundcover, and even perennial vegetables— after the initial preparation you don't need to continually turn the soil over. So *people-power* is the real economical, sensible way to go.

You'll doubtless see tons of ads for such power tillers, smaller cultivators that run on 2 cycle engines and they certainly do churn organic materials for you. They have various attachments as well. Sometimes these machines do not give you the kind of depth you need, they can wear on you physically as well. If yours weighs 25 pounds you might actually start missing your hoes, trowels and other hand tools before too long.

Of course, if you have a really large property and wish to expand beyond the scope discussed in this book then by all means go for it. Big tillers, with tons of power can do a lot of work for the very ambitious gardener. Remember too, you can experiment with these powerful marvels by renting them, too.

Weekend Weeding & Cultivating Tools

Weekenders cultivate soil for many reasons. Breaking up clods or a hard soil surface to prepare a seed bed, cultivating the soil to mix in lime, peat or other organic material. This cultivation disturbs weed seeds and is used for weed control, too. The following tools help you with all you weeding and cultivating chores.

Hoes. They come in hundreds of styles, some designed to fit special spacing between rows of particular crops. The most common, however, is the simple garden hoe, which has a square blade and a long handle. You can use the sharp edge of the hoe to loosen up encrusted soil and to cut through small weeds. You'll most likely to cultivate soil in a newly planted garden and this tool allows you to get close to each plant. But if you've mulched like I've recommended in this book your hoeing chores will automatically be lessened.

Claws, forks, or cultivators. Specialized pronged or tined tools that help you get at single weeds or small patches of weeds. When you use them to scratch across the soil, they snag and allow you to dig up weeds that are too tough for a hoe.

Weekend Pruning Tools

Weekenders use pruning tools to cut, and shape. The one you choose depends on the size of the branch or the type of cut you wish to make. No one tool does it all in this category and you may wish to eventually own all of the following tools.

Hedge shears. These two-handled shears have long blades that trim a hedge into flat surfaces. Pruning a formal hedge requires an enormous amount of work several times a year. Clipping with hedges can seem to shear your hands more than the hedge you're working on! This is one case where I recommend the more modern and powerful electric shears. Use them for dried stalks or perennials and ornamental grasses in late winter.

Hand-held pruning shears. These cut stems less than ½ inch thick and is the tool of choice for pruning most shrubs. Thicker stems will ruin the alignment of the shears so avoid using them for this. Shears with steel blades stay sharp longer and are worth the extra money they cost.

Lopping shears. Sturdy and stronger than hand-held clippers these shears have long handles with more leverage for cutting branches between 1 and 1 ½ inches thick. With an extended reach these afford easier work at cutting branches at the base of deciduous shrubs and branches just above head height.

Pruning saws. These cut through stems and branches larger than 1 ½ inches thick. The pruning saw is not like a carpenter's saw; it cuts both on the push and the pull strokes. Small curved blades, many of which will fold back into a wooden handle so it can be stored safely. There are **pole saws** for high limbs which will save you from getting the ladder out and allow you to reach upwards to 15 feet beyond your normal reach.

Chain saws. This is an invaluable tool for cutting down small and medium trees and then using it to create firewood. It allows you to cut larger wood than you can do by hand (not to mention less wear and tear on your body) and does a big job in a much shorter amount of time. There are both gas and electric powered brands.

Weekenders Raking And Blowing Tools

Dealing with fallen leaves can become a major event in the life of a weekend gardener. There is just no getting around the chore. However, these tools can make the work go more efficiently for you.

Leaf rakes. Also known as lawn rakes, these are usually lightweight rakes with 48 inch long wooden handles and long tines can come in bamboo, plastic or metal. They vary in size from 10 to 30 inches on the spread of tines. A 24-30 inch wide rake makes fast work of pulling leaves off the lawn and your beds into piles. You can use it to scoop up the pile and then deposit it into a wheelbarrow or large leaf bag.

Here's a tip on raking a lawn. To dramatically cut down on the amount of movement you must make rake leaves into parallel rows as you walk backward across the lawn. Create the rows with a single sweep of the rake with each step you take. Afterwards, rake each neat row into small piles. Finally, use the rake to scoop up and deposit each pile into your bag or wheelbarrow.

Leaf blowers. These are meant to clean your lawn, walkway or driveway by supposedly blowing fallen leaves into piles fast. Then, switching the blower around, you suck up the piled leaves and shred them into coin-sized pieces that get gathered into a zippered collection bag. There is the hand-held, backpack, or wheeled versions available.

The gas models are usually more powerful than the electric models, but the electric are usually quieter. I recommend the gas model because of this added power; enough to do a good job, and there is no cord that can get tangled and stuck in beds, in shrubs and all manner of obstruction around you.

Weekenders Leaf Eating And Brush Chomping Tools

After raking - or blowing - your leaves into piles, you can get rid of them by burning or bagging them for collection. Of course, burning pollutes the air and many municipalities have created laws against this form of disposal. And grass clippings have fallen out of favor in some towns and cities, for landfill, as well. Of course, as a gardener you know the value of composting leaves or using them as mulch. Leaves transform into compost faster and make a better mulch if they are shredded first.

Power mowers. One of the best tools to shred leaves. Many have a grass catcher where the refuse collects. If you empty this you'll have a treasure trove of mulch to use.

The Leaf Eater. Without a power mower to shred your leaves you can purchase a machine from Vornado Power Products, the Leaf Eater which is designed specifically for shredding leaves. It has a wide mouth leaf hopper than can sit on top of a garbage can or stand on its own tripod. It eats leaves as fast as you can load them. A spinning nylon cord whacks at the leaves which then are sifted through a special shutter at the bottom, providing a uniform end product. You can change the shutter setting as well to choose the

size of the shredded leaves you desire. There are both gas and electric models and the electric one is quieter. You may find it listed in catalogs or under the Craftsman label at your Sears store.

Chipper/shredders. There are many of these machines on the market and each chips and grinds slim tree branches and brush into shreds. Most do this pretty well, but are less capable at leaf eating.

The brush eating apparatus of chipper/shredders do work well at turning twigs and small branches into the intake chute turning in a product of neat sized wood chips which are excellent for mulching.

Weekenders Edging Tools

As a dedicated weekender, (and having read this far) you don't need to waste time edging a lawn, because you installed mowing strips and edging already— right? These will take care of nearly all your problems. But in case you wish to take care of the random edging job, here are some tools made for more maintenance.

Spades. For the small edging jobs where lawn grass has crept unto a bed or border. Hold it perpendicular to the ground with both hands and rest the sharp blade against the grass.

Half moon lawn edger. For the larger jobs this tool will allow you to use its half-moon curved knife to edge. Use it as you would a spade.

Grass shears. This time-honored tool is designed for edging chores around tree trunks, rock walls, and similar obstacles where a mower can reach. They commonly have short handles, but there are long handled types which allow you stand rather than kneel down to cut.

String trimmers. These cut grass that's left behind by the mower. They spin a plastic monofilament line that slices off the grass. But beware: these same lines can slice into bark on young trees and shrubs, skinning the trunk. They can also catch a pebble or other debris and send it whizzing toward you, your eyes, or tender flesh. Always wear goggles when operating it.

Weekenders Lawn Mowing Tools

Everyone needs some sort of machine to mow their lawn. A good mower can make this large chore more bearable. There are several types to consider when you wish to.

Reel mowers. No snickering now. These mowers may seem old fashioned and from the days when Grandpa worked the lawn but they have made an incredible comeback. Modern versions are made with



heavy-duty ball bearings that reduce resistance and make pushing them easier. Many parts are now made with lightweight plastic or aluminum, so the mower may weigh only 25-35 pounds. You know, there's a pleasant sound associated with these mowers. The whirring is quiet instead of the ear-splitting sound of the power mowing engine. It never runs out of gas and it always starts without pulling and tugging furiously on a rip cord. It never needs tuning either.

Its drawback is when the reel mower encounters twigs which may get lodged in the blades and you will have to either back up the mower or bend over to dislodge the offender. It's also useless on a leaf-covered lawn.

Power mowers. These rotary mowers cut well and offer enough features to take some of the pain out of mowing your lawn. A basic new mower will run you about \$300 and up, but some go as high as \$800 and more, offering self-propulsion, rear bagging, optional side discharge, a blade-brake clutch and more whistles and bells.

Mulching mowers. These mowers have been around for over 30 years chomping up lawn clippings, leaves and debris. Their final product is like a fine powder which is spewed back down around grass roots. The clippings disintegrate quickly and act as natural fertilizers.

If you purchase one make sure it's a 'dedicated' mulcher, not one that mulches by forcing clippings through an attachment. These tend to clog badly and simply don't do the job needed.

Riding mowers. The cost of these gallant charges can run to several thousand dollars, depending on their horsepower, size and other features. If you have a lawn less than ½ acre they probably are not necessary at all, in fact they may be impractical in difficult to get at small areas.

Weekenders' Garden Hoses And Attachment Tools

When looking for a garden hose, keep in mind the best are made of rubber and surpass other types in flexibility, durability, and resistance to twisting and kinking. But they are heavy. Hoses of rubber cost more, as well. Then there is the combo hose made of vinyl and rubber, they cost less, are lighter, and if three ply or more should perform well.

Hoses come in three standard diameters - ½ inch, 5/8 inch, and ¾ inch. - and in lengths of 25, 50, 75, and 100 ft.

Click in hose couplers. These gadgets have one end of each faucet and are on the end of each hose, nozzle, and sprinkler. Instead of twisting them to get them joined together when you lengthen or shorten your hose you simply snap them apart. There are plastic and brass versions.

Y-connectors. These allow you to hook up more than one hose at a time as each side has its own faucet. They work well if you need to attach to another outlet on opposite sides of your house and extend the reach of your watering.

Hose guides. You'll find these essential if you tend to pull hoses widely around your property. These grooved caps on long spikes prevent the hose from flattening flowers and tangling with shrubs. They provide a guide along the ground, especially at corners.

Sprinklers. There are several basic types here and some can be quite expensive. Look for models with brass nozzles or fittings where the water emerges; poor quality sprinklers have holes punched in the tubes or arms rather than these fittings.

There are three main types of sprinklers. The first is the *oscillating variety* with a long arm that moves back and forth in a wave action. These are ideal for large lawns because the spray is so high. *Rotary sprinklers* which send water out in squares or circles. They throw water lower and less far than oscillating kinds and are well suited for small gardens and can get into corners. Then, *impulse sprinklers* send water in a strong on-and-off jet in a full or partial circle. They are mounted on stakes so they are ideal for sending water over hedges or a shrub bed.

Weekenders' Wheelbarrows, Carts, And Garden Cloths

You can save much time and effort with a wheelbarrow or cart. They are great for moving heavy loads from compost, peat moss, grass clippings, to wood chips or what-have-you.

Garden carts. This has two large wheels, a plywood body, and metal trim, handles, and legs. It balances the weight of its load over the axle and wheels, allowing you to trundle heavy loads with little effort. In fact, with about 5 pounds of push, you can lift as much as 400 pounds in the cart. It's perfect for any heavy, bulky load you have to transport. Just be careful going down steep hills!

Wheelbarrows. Although less stable than a cart, a wheelbarrow moves over hilly terrain better because it divides its weight between the wheel and your back, arm, and shoulder muscles. This allows better traction. Placing more of the weight toward the front of the barrow, more weight is distributed to the wheels and less on your shoulders. It also maneuvers better than a cart and can traverse a narrow path.

The *garden wheelbarrow* is a model that is made entirely of wood, including wooden wheel treaded on steel. If you purchase one make sure it has removable sides panels so you can use it to tip and dump out material. The *contractor's wheelbarrow* is less expensive and easy to come by, made with a metal or plastic tub, wooden handles and a pneumatic tire. The tire moves easily along rocky paths taking the shock away from your arms.

Garden cloths. This is handy for moving leaves, clippings, and other debris. A simple tarpaulin of woven polyester which is sturdy and lightweight. Once filled gather the four corners together and lift it over your shoulder. If it's too heavy to lift you can drag it to whatever location you wish.

Garden tote bag. A variation of the garden cloth it is made of laminated polyethylene and fold up neatly and unfolds into a shallow container with handles. The reinforced corners hold the bag wide open and when unfolded it makes a good target for the weeds you can toss into it. Very handy for when you are weeding and want something that makes a trip to the compost heap a snatch.

Weekenders' Mulch

The most time-saving garden "tool" is mulch. For every garden site you will save tons of time during the growing season because mulched gardens are healthier, more weed free and more drought resistant than un-mulched gardens. There are two basic types of mulch: organic and inorganic. Both discourage weeds, but organic mulches also improve the soil.

Organic mulches. You can buy bags of wood chips or shredded bark at your garden center, and while they may look lovely, they cost a lot. Your local tree care company is a less expensive source for wood chips. Your local electric company may sell wood chips. Many communities have grass clippings from fall leaves that they will give back to the community, as long as you're willing to haul it out. Of course, if you have lots of trees on your property, collect the shredded fallen leaves which create a nutrient rich mulch. Another freebie is the grass clippings from your mowed lawn.

Inorganic mulches. The most common here are gravel, stones, black plastic, and landscape fabrics.

Black plastic. When using plastic it heats up in the sun, warming the soil and spreading the heat during the night. This protects vegetables from rotting and keeps them clean in the bargain.

In raised bed gardens, lay down a sheet over the entire bed. Bury the edges or weight them down with rocks. Then punch holes in the plastic covering. Then proceed to plant your seeds through the holes or place transplants through them. You always re-use this plastic covering in subsequent years.

Because water can penetrate the plastic, the mulch retains soil moisture while preventing rain water from soaking the planting bed. A drip irrigation system is ideal for a covered bed like this; you could also lay soaker hoses down beneath the plastic for irrigation.

Don't use black plastic to mulch shrubs or trees. Water and air are kept out so roots grow too close to the soil surface seeking moisture and oxygen. The shallow roots suffer from lack of oxygen and moisture.

Landscape fabrics. Made from geotextiles like woven or spun threads of polypropylene, nylon, or polyester, they were originally used for road constructions and soil stabilization projects. Both air and water permeate them so landscape fabrics were thought to be the perfect garden mulch. But, although they lasted indefinitely, they break down under ultra-violet light. They look pretty ugly and require burial under wood chips mulch to make them more eye-appealing. Once the wood chip layer begins to decay, weeds will germinate on top of the fabric. You need to pull these weeds while still small, or they will adhere to the fabric.

Weekenders' Compost

This invaluable "tool" in your arsenal improves soil, making it easier to work while encouraging plant success. You should routinely transform leaves, grass, clippings, garden trimmings, weeds into your compost. Even kitchen refuse (garbage) can work here. This humble compost is nothing more than organic material that rots into garden gold.

Hot and cold composting. By turning over your compost pile almost daily, you can you can transform waste into workable compost in a matter of weeks. Or you can simply wait a year or more and harvest without lifting a finger once the pile is built. The quicker method is called *hot composting* because it actually heats up to about 150 degrees.

The slow method is called *cold composting* because it never heats up appreciably. You are best off with cold composting as a weekender because it saves so much time and effort.

Providing a nice diet of microorganism is the key to successful composting. By mixing one third high nitrogen to two-thirds high carbon components in a pile large enough to retain heat and moisture you release microbes that do their thing for you. It's easy to remember which ingredients are high nitrogen and which are high carbon. Think in terms of "green" and "brown".

Materials high in carbon generally appear brown, or dry. High nitrogen material is green like grass clippings, vegetable peelings, kitchen scraps and other meats, plant trimmings, weeds, etc.

If you chop up the ingredients in your compost pile, like shredding weeds or newspaper clippings, they will degrade much faster. There are as many ways to create a compost pile as there are gardeners so don't be afraid to bring this question to your gardening neighbors and friends. They will probably tell you that layering is generally recognized as a good method.

Layer the green and the brown ingredients with a little garden soil thrown in to let it come in contact with the microbes. Create a heap about 3 cubic feet in size. You can contain it in a special bin or in an out of the way area of your yard.

Compost tumbler. If you simply must have a hot compost, and you don't want to jab at the pile every day you can invest in a compost tumbler. They provide an easy method which takes about five minutes a day. They look like a barrel mounted on a stand. You load the tumbler up with green and brown mix, add a sprinkling of activator or soil and then turn it on. You get the finished product in just seven weeks.

Appendix A: Weekenders' Year Long Calendar Of Activities

When you only have your weekends, or part of them to develop your beautiful backyard garden it's all too easy to turn your plans into longer than needed expeditions of gardening. It looks like this:

1. You get started.
2. You lose track of time.
3. Your weekend ends.

The whole purpose of this book has been to fill you up with perfect alternatives to an impossibly high-maintenance garden. Now if you don't *plan your time* well even these activities and choices can ruin your hopes of freedom and peace of mind.

If you don't want to topple over from sheer exhaustion it's best to break down your basic activities into gardening chores you can accomplish quickly, easily and with fore-knowledge.

Remember the key is to *enjoy* your weekends not slave through them. This section will help you along. In constructing, a choice in the **USDA** zone had to be made for simplicity's sake. In this case **zone 7** was chosen when spring arrives the first week of April. *If you live farther north or south, adjust the times accordingly.*

You will find gardening activities that take you through each month of the year. The idea that gardening only needs to occur in the warmer months, leaving winter months behind is false. There is always the 'good work' to be done— work which will allow your intensive growing months to arrive with much less fear and trepidation on your part. Besides, doing some gardening *all year long* makes this pastime one of the most wonderful ever undertaken by human-kind. You're a gardener and your life will never be quite the same again! Let's get started.

Happy New Year! January

First Weekend: Take any boughs from this year's Christmas tree and other greenery and place them over perennial beds which will help keep the ground frozen during the inevitable thaw. If you haven't done so yet, order your free 1000 free tips from me by sending a blank e-mail to:1000GardenTips@getresponse.com You'll start getting a new tip every single day which you can save in a folder on your computer for later study.

Second Weekend: Why not look at photographs of your garden from last year and make some sketches or plans for additions or areas you wish to stop developing. Spend some time with gardening books. If you've subscribed to my **1000 gardening tips** and placed them in a folder on your computer already, browse through them for some ideas. Lots of catalogs may arrive in the mail at this time of the year. If not, order a few this weekend.

Third Weekend: If the weather happens to be mild enough outdoors you can always trim deciduous shrubs and trees. If not, try arranging some evergreens into that lonely looking window box on your patio. Experiment with any plant that has a unique, interesting outline. I like **Queen Anne's lace**, **bittersweet** and **gas plants** (*Dictamnus albus*).

Fourth Weekend. This is a great weekend to actually order some seeds for vegetable gardens. If it hasn't snowed yet, poke around outside for some weeds that are cool-season and pull them out. You can also do some pruning if weather permits.

February

First weekend: Browse through any flower catalogs and order a batch of perennials.

Outside, be on the lookout for early bulbs and draw back mulch if needed. You can also spend some time placing some potted plants in a shed or garage, just make sure they aren't in clay pots and they stay very lightly moist and mulch them with heavy straw, wood chips or burlap to keep them free from frost.

Second Weekend: You can lightly prune any spring flowering shrubs and bring the branches inside for forcing. You can also visit your local flower shop and spend some time smelling the flowers that have been forced by others; or splurge and buy some to place inside and bring you some indoor color.

Third Weekend: Great weekend to take the lawn mower in for sharpening and a tune-up. First of all, you'll beat everyone to the punch when they do the same thing in the first week they intend to cut grass. Try and get an appointment then! Also inspect all your tools; repair and sharpen as needed.

Fourth Weekend: Inspect gardens for cool season weeds, and get rid of them before they set seeds. Prune any berry plants you have.

March

First weekend: Prune needle-leaf evergreens, if needed. Look around your yard and remove winter-damaged branches. Begin to remove winter mulches.

Second Weekend: Begin early spring cleanup. Mow lawns short and remove clippings. Apply lawn nutrients and lime if needed. Order some fall blooming bulbs.

Third weekend: Continue spring clean-up. Cut back dried stalks of perennials. Start a new compost heap.

Fourth weekend: Cut back ornamental grasses and mow winter damaged ground covers. Prune any dead or damaged branches on shrub roses. Mow the meadow garden.

April

First weekend: Loosen soil in vegetable beds (as long as ground isn't too wet) and add compost. Begin sowing staggered plantings of cool season vegetables.

Second weekend: Look over your vegetable garden some more. Sow staggered plantings again this weekend. Photograph the garden, especially bulbs so you can refer to them when bulb planting time arrives. Prune summer-flowering shrubs. Sow annual seeds in your meadow garden.

Third weekend: Renew mulch under shrubs. Begin dividing perennials. You can continue to stagger plantings. Deadhead bulbs. Mow grass, setting blades for spring height.

Fourth weekend: Continue sowing staggered plantings. Also dividing perennials. Renew mulch in perennial beds.

May

First weekend: Begin planting perennials and shrubs. Take out hoses and inspect. Prune spring-flowering shrubs after the flowers have faded.

Second weekend: Purchase vegetable seedlings. Begin planting warm season vegetables. Continue planting perennials and shrubs. Photograph garden for records.

Third weekend: Continue planting vegetable garden. Purchase and begin planting flowering annuals.

Fourth weekend: Finish planting flowering annuals. Finish pruning spring-flowering shrubs. Divide spring-blooming bulbs as foliage becomes yellow.

June

First Weekend: Mow grass; set blades for summer height. Cut back dead bulbs foliage and finish dividing spring bulbs. Begin summer watering routine if needed. Stake tomatoes, vines, and perennials.

Second weekend: Make another photographic record of your garden. Design new planting areas in preparation of Fourth of July sales; strip off sod. Compost sod.

Third Weekend: Turn over soil in new planting area, work in compost, peat moss, and other soil improvements.

Fourth weekend: Deadhead perennials. Kill young warm season weeds before they get too big.

July

First weekend: 4th of July sales happen this week; plant your new garden. Harvest currants and raspberries.

Second weekend: Photograph again for records. Finish planting new garden.

Third weekend: Deadhead perennials. Plant cool-season fall vegetable seeds. Begin harvesting blueberries, tomatoes, peppers.

Fourth weekend: Eradicate warm season weeds

August

First weekend: Study garden photos taken in spring and summer, order spring flowering bulbs, dormant perennials, and dormant woody plants from catalogs.

Second weekend: Deadhead perennials. Shop for and plant cool-season vegetable transplants.

Third Weekend: Plant fall blooming bulbs.

Fourth weekend: Begin harvesting fall raspberries. Inspect gardens for weeds, especially cool season weed seedlings; eradicate them.

September

First weekend: Mow lawn setting blades for fall height. Sow grass seed for new lawns or to repair bare patches. Apply fall nutrients to lawn.

Second weekend: Begin planting any mail order or locally bought shrubs, trees, and perennials. Photograph garden for records. Sow seeds for meadow garden.

Third weekend: Continue planting shrubs and trees. Divide overgrown perennials, such as iris. Plant lily bulbs.

Fourth weekend: Shop for spring-blooming bulbs. Root-prune shrubs you intend to move or transplant in spring.

October

First weekend: Generally tidy vegetable garden.

Second weekend: Plant spring-blooming bulbs.

Third weekend: Finish bulb planting. Cut back perennials if needed, only after frost kills the tops. Remove frost-killed annuals.

Fourth weekend: Begin raking and shredding leaves. Clean vegetable garden, composting healthy plants, discarding suspect ones in trash.

November

First weekend: If fall has been drier than usual, water shrubs and flower borders deeply to prepare plants for winter. Cut back dried perennials if desired; allow attractive seed-pods to stand over winter.

Second weekend: Continue raking and shredding leaves. Till shredded leaves into vegetable garden.

Third weekend: Continue raking and shredding leaves. Lower mower blade and perform final lawn mowing.

Fourth weekend: Final major leaf raking and shredding. Bag some shredded leaves or store under tarpaulin to be used later as mulch; compost the rest.

December

First weekend: Cut back yellow asparagus fronds. Apply lime to lawn, if needed. Water newly planted woody plants if November was dry.

Second weekend: Inspect and repair tools; put in storage.

Third weekend: Apply winter mulch of shredded leaves to frozen ground in perennial beds, shrub borders, and woodland garden.

Fourth weekend: Take it easy! You deserve a complete weekend off during this holiday season.

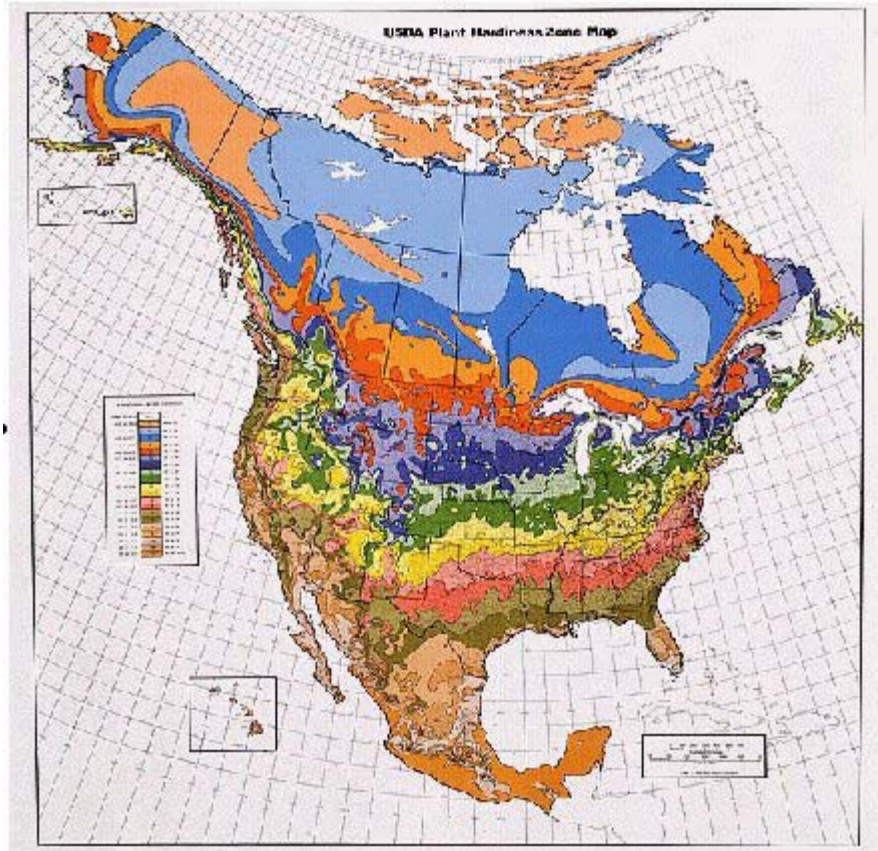
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Appendix B: USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map



To use your map click this link and go to The National Arboretum main page which will allow you to search directly by state. This is a wonderful site chock full of helpful information about your temperate zone.

Click here: <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/ushzmap.html>

Appendix C: Weekend Gardeners' Resources

The following resources are ones I have used personally and have found to be reliable for different gardening needs. Though I can't be responsible for each company and the way they fulfill your particular needs and orders, each has proven *excellent* in my own search to get materials to make a beautiful backyard garden. As you probably have noticed, I'm a big fan of simplicity. There are hundreds of gardening supply companies— but I have chosen to use just these two. Together with my local merchants, they have provided me with every tool, seed, plant, flower, mix, grass, shrub— well, you get the idea. I hope you decide to use these sources as well and find them as 'time friendly' as I have. - VKP

[Charley's Greenhouse and Garden](#)

<http://www.myaffiliateprogram.com/u/charleys/t.asp?id=1180>

[Yardiac.com](#)

<http://www.yardiac.com/>

Afterword

My sincere hope is that you start the wonderful adventure of weekend gardening. You will be entering one of the premiere hobbies in the world. Gardening has grown by 350% in just 2001, and more devotees are joining our ranks every day. You'll soon see for yourself that the satisfaction of growing your own backyard garden is one that never ends.

Each gardening season will allow you to perform new experiments, to refine and perfect your knowledge. Be gentle with yourself if you are just starting out. If a perfect garden isn't realized in season one or two, don't worry. Nature slowly but inexorably makes headway that is remarkable - and so will you.

Thank you for taking this journey of discovery with me. I'm positive that if you maintain a steady pace and enjoy the process, you'll be a very fine gardener.

Victor K. Pryles

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About the Author



Victor K. Pryles started his love of gardening at the age of nine. His mother, an exceptional gardener, would always bring him into her garden, where he found the beauty and joy of seeing something grow out of the earth, a true delight. Many years later he would develop his own considerations of how to best garden. This book is the culmination of his thirty years of gardening experiments, both the successes and the failures.

In spite of his work as a business consultant, a working photographer, a writer, and a broadcaster in American major markets, he eventually realized he needed 'time' to garden. It was a discovery that he could make sure the feel of the earth in his hands, which always brought him a sense of joy, could find a place in his busy life experience.

"Loving nature is a simple thing", he says. "When you become a part of the wonder of sun, plant, and earth, you can really find yourself. It's a remarkable marriage once you find out how to join your professional life with this marvelous activity called gardening. My problem was how to manage it all and work in this complex world we are forced to confront."

This book is his effort to make the 'work' of gardening a pleasure that you can enjoy.

The Weekend Gardener- A Busy Person's Guide To A Beautiful Backyard Garden is designed to bring the simple, yet magnificent experience of gardens, to everybody's backyard. Accomplishing this is really possible, regardless of how stressed and 'time-crunched' you may be in this new millennium.

Once you find the time to garden and discover the happiness that this pastime affords, you will agree with the author that the best experiences are always very, very close; as close as your own backyard.

Pryles is also the best selling author of

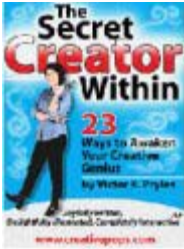
"The Secret Creator Within"- 23 Ways To Awaken Your Creative Genius at <http://www.creativepops.com/>

and

"Anyone Can Consult"- How To Use What You Already Know To Help Others And Make A Sizeable Extra Income at <http://www.authorsden.com/victorkpryles>

Other Books By The Author:

The Secret Creator Within- 23 Ways To Awaken Your Creative Genius



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