

Petite Gardenscapes By Pat Baganz

Evaluation

Expectations

Solutions

Shop locally

Satisfaction

Alternates

Research

Port's Garden Club

Critter damage

Newsletter

Happy 2009! Ok, fellow gardeners: Resolution # 1: Turn over a new leaf. (Yes, an intended pun-this is a gardening newsletter, after all.)

So, how did your garden grow this year? Looking back (and out the window at the snow-covered debris of Summer Garden 2008) were you satisfied?

Now is the time to evaluate your impressions, so that Summer 2009 can meet your expectations.

Here are my top three things that can go wrong in a garden : 1) the plants don't look or perform the way you expect 2) the amount of work you put into your garden is more than you get in satisfaction or 3) you're ready for a new look, but don't get around to it. The good news is, there are solutions for all three problems.

Expectations: those great plant catalogs promise wonderful looks, but if you have the plant in the wrong place, or in the wrong temperature zone, you won't get what you want.

Along Lake Michigan in southeastern Wisconsin, we are in zone 5. Further inland, it's zone 4. A plant may survive in our climate, but not bloom as prolifically, grow

January 2009

to the size in the catalog, or be as fragrant as the same plant growing in a warmer climate.

The solution? Don't buy brand new just-out varieties with unbelievable claims, unless you have a huge budget to gamble with. Wait until next season when you can check with other gardeners to see if the plant lives up to the hyped advertising. The price will probably have dropped by the second season, too.

Realistically, you're best off **shopping locally**, where plants are grown in this area, rather than shipped in from the south. Check the list of southern Wisconsin nurseries at the end of this newsletter.

Work vs. Satisfaction: You're spending more hours than you can afford in your garden and not getting the look you want.

After planting 12 flats of impatiens at the edge of our sidewalk for years, I finally put in a perennial groundcover. I can use all that saved time to plant, water and fertilize other gardens, mine or yours.

Think about **replacing** 75% of those annuals with perennials, but be sure to keep some of those long-blooming annuals among your new perennials for all-summer color.

Take out perennials that need lots of pinching back and deadheading. **Replace** them with small shrubs that have interesting foliage and fragrant blooms. They won't need cutting down in the winter or raking up in the spring, plus they add interest and structure in the winter landscape. The next newsletter will feature some tried and true favorites and some new (but tested) shrubs to give your garden a new look.

So, what should you be doing right now? First of all, while looking at those luscious plant catalogs, make a note of the plants you like, then do some **research**:

-Google them- there's a lot of reliable information out there, for instance www.hort.uconn.edu

-Check gardening blogs

-Ask questions of me or other Port Washington's Garden Club members at www.portgardenclub.org
Plan to shop at the **Port Washington Garden Club's** yearly plant sale in May. These plants are overflow from members' gardens, they're priced right, and we don't sell problem plants)

Ozaukee Gardener Advice

by Elizabeth O'Connell

Critter Damage

A quick inspection of your yard may reveal damage to your plants. To protect them from future harm it's necessary to understand what's happening to them.

The most common animal damage in our area is caused by rabbits and meadow voles rather than deer. Deer strip the lower branches of evergreens like arborvitae and may eat the bark from the trunks and low-hanging branches of hardwood trees. In extreme cases this can kill the tree although cosmetic damage is more common. Wrap young trees to protect them until mature bark begins to harden. Where extreme population

pressure limits the food supply barrier protection may be the only way to prevent deer damage.

Rabbit and meadow vole damage is easier to prevent. Meadow voles look like small mice with stubby tails and, unlike chipmunks and ground squirrels, voles are active and eating all winter. They tunnel under the ground's surface and consume not only bark and tender shrub and perennial stems but also tuberous roots and corms of plants like iris. Heavy snow gives meadow voles excellent cover and vole damage may go unobserved until the spring thaw. Voles frequently kill young trees by girdling their bark under the snow line.

A thorough autumn clean up is the first line of defense against voles. Removing frosted leaves and stems gives voles fewer hiding places and allows natural predators to control their population. Hardware cloth hoops can protect new trees and shrubs from vole damage. The metal mesh with half inch square openings is readily available at local hardware and box stores and effectively excludes the tiny animals.

Local nurseries/websites

Check to see if they sell -the plant you want. -You'll get a plant used to our temperature zone if you do

Flower Factor (Stoughton, WI)

www.theflowerfactorynursery.com

Jung Seed Company (and plants)

www.jungseed.com

Klems Song Sparrow Farm (Avalon, WI) (mail order)

www.songsparrow.com

Minor's Garden Center (Milwaukee, WI)

www.minorsgardencenter.com

Monches Farm (Colgate WI)

www.monchesfarm.com

Rich's Foxwillow Farm (Woodstock, IL)

www.richsfoxwillowpines.com

