

Haddam Garden Club

September 2018 Garden Blog Article

by Cindy Tillson



Is Your Garden Too Much for You? Garden Smarter, Not Harder

Even if the overall effect is lovely, when it's our garden, we can get hung up on what needs to be done instead of just appreciating the beauty that is there. If that's you, there are many things you can do to reduce the amount of work required of you, so that you're able to focus on doing the things that bring you joy in the garden. I will talk about a few here.

Buy well-designed tools, label them with your name and keep them sharp and clean. I find it so frustrating to attempt a task with a dull or inappropriate tool. Paint the handles of your tools with bright paint so you can spot them in the garden or lawn—and when working with a group, yours are unmistakably identifiable.

Make good edges. Plan your edges: make straight lines using stakes and string for a guide and curved lines by laying out a garden hose. Make your curves graceful and keep in mind that outward curves are easier to mow against than inward curves. Edge with an edging tool: a stand up tool with a sharp half moon blade. Dig in along your line, overlapping for a continuous edge. Remove and toss (or repurpose) the sod edge. There are many edging materials on the market to hold that line you worked so hard for. I caution you about stones or pavers. It looks great the day you do it but grass and weeds inevitably creep in between. Maybe the effort to keep it clean is worth it to you. Personally, I just leave the neat edge, put my mower wheel in it when I mow and clean any weeds out from time to time; I find I only have to do the real edging once a year. It satisfies my perfectionist.

Plant in drifts instead of one of this, a couple of that. It will give you a lush, full area of color, choke out weeds and cover the soil. The assortment approach requires you to understand plant politics like who doesn't like whom and which ones play well with others. A drift of all one plant has the same soil and light requirements throughout and the plants adore each other.

Get rid of fussy plants. Daylilies, low maintenance? Really? After the brief flowering period you need to cut out the stalks. Soon the leaves start turning brown and you need to clean those out, repeatedly. Do you have plants that are always sick? Plagued with bugs? Need constant fluffing to look good? Replace those. Native plants thrive in the fickle conditions our area presents, always have and always will. Many are very pretty at multiple points in the year; draw birds and wildlife yet many are not attractive to our nemesis, deer.

Always watering? Buy plants that don't require damp soil. Lean toward drought tolerant even! Make sure the soil you plant in has a lot of organic matter to hold

the water it gets. If you really must have those water hogs, try drip irrigation—on a timer so you don't drain the well.

You could also enlist help for a few hours here and there. A good weeder can make a big difference in a short time. So can a bad one. Just be sure they know which plants are the keepers.

When you think your garden looks good, it makes you feel good. Hopefully the labor it demands consists of the chores you enjoy. Try to work smarter instead of harder. It is even more rewarding. Stop being a perfectionist. Let your garden bring you the joy it was meant to.

September is a good time to reflect on what worked and didn't in your garden and make some changes too. You can always refer back to my older columns on our website, haddamgardenclub.com.

The Haddam Garden Club will resume monthly meetings in September. On September 12, John Himmelman, a local author from Killingworth, will do a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Butterflies and their gardens". We will learn about butterflies and moths and how to attract them to our gardens. The public is welcome to join us. The program will start around 11:30 at the Community Center in Higganum.