



Right Plant, Right Place

An excellent gardener's mantra, especially important at this time of year. I don't know about you but after a lengthy winter I am plant starved. It's been a long time since my gardens were growing and flowering. I barely remember what they look like! The nurseries are opening and are so colorful and inviting. My impulses will probably get the best of me and I will come home with plants that I just have to have, with no idea where I will put them. When I get the impulses under control, I will follow my own advice of "right plant, right place."

A good place to start is to learn the conditions of your particular gardens. Is it sunny or shady? How many hours of sunlight a day does it get—and is it morning or afternoon sun? Is the soil rocky, sandy, clay, or loamy? Is the site always wet? Really dry? Somewhere in between? Does the water run off the roof directly into it? Is it sheltered or open to the wind?

Once you have determined the natural conditions of your area, search out the plants that are well suited to it. Grouping plants with similar need together makes sense. When dealing with trees and shrubs, be sure to arrange and space them appropriately so that each one has the space it needs when full grown. Yes, it might look sparse for a year or two, but patience is of utmost importance here. You can fill in the gaps with perennials, annuals or containers. Here you can push the envelope a little if you must. Losing a perennial is much less painful than losing a tree.

When choosing the plants, evaluate their pest and disease proclivity. Is it native or non-native? A River Birch is native, very attractive and not bothered by the Bronze Birch Borer (*Agilus anxius* Bory) that bothers the pretty white paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and several other birch varieties. I would want to know this. Natives are generally the right choice anyway.

There are lovely alternatives to invasives we have come to like too. Japanese Barberry is terribly invasive but there are equally as beautiful alternatives suggested by UMASS extension: *Weigela* 'Midnight Wine', *Fothergilla gardenii* (who wouldn't want a plant named Fothergilla?), *Itea virginica* – Virginia Sweetspire and *Diervilla lonicera* – Dwarf bush honeysuckle. The same goes for *Euonymus alatus* -Burning Bush. They offer five alternatives.

A word to the wise—Research the growth habit of plants you are considering at a reliable plant database like UMASS or UCONN before you let it grace your property. University of Massachusetts Extension offers a [comprehensive plant selection guide](#) for managed landscapes. Besides specific plants, it includes important guidelines to consider when selecting. This will keep the wrong plant from going into the right place and either taking over or meeting its demise.

There are only so many things you can do to amend a site. It is far better to evaluate the site and get plants that are suited to that site. Your plants have a much better chance of thriving and you will save yourself a lot of money and labor in the long run. If you really must have THAT plant, and you know deep down it is not the right plant for your site, put it in a container that you can move around. Maybe you can find the right place.

The community plant sales are also starting to spring up. You can get great deals there and your plant dollars go much further. They can be great sales, just be careful. I suggest you plant purchases made from non-garden affiliated groups off to the side so you can watch it for the first year. It may work out beautifully but if it doesn't, it will be less disruptive to move or remove.

There are three plant sales in Haddam this spring selling healthy plants that you can trust to be endorsed by solid gardeners. The

Haddam Garden Club is holding theirs Saturday May 4 at the Haddam Elementary School as part of the town wide tag sale (rain date 5/5)

Haddam Land Trust will be holding their plant sale on Saturday, May 18 at the UCONN Extension Center on Saybrook Rd.

CT Master Gardeners are having their plant sale on Sat June 1 at the UCONN Extension Center on Saybrook Rd as well.

Gardening success will come by having the right plant in the right place, but we all need to make our own mistakes. I don't think a garden is ever finished anyway.

A Couple More Thoughts...

The April meeting of the Haddam Garden Club is a closed meeting.

Digging In recipe of the month:

SCALLOPS WITH MUSHROOMS IN SHELLS

Submitted by Barbara Stellenwerf

Yield 6 servings

½ cup butter, at room temperature, divided
1 cup thinly sliced mushrooms
3 TBS finely chopped shallots
1 TBS finely chopped garlic
1 lb. fresh bay scallops
1 /2 cup soft breadcrumbs
½ cup finely chopped parsley
Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 450.

Melt ¼ cup of butter in small skillet and add mushrooms. Cook, stirring often, until mushrooms are wilted and give up their liquid. Add shallots and garlic and cook briefly.

Spoon mushroom mixture into a mixing bowl. Let cool briefly. Then add 2 TBS of remaining butter, scallops, breadcrumbs, parsley, salt and pepper to taste. Blend well. Use mixture to fill 6 seafood shells or ramekins.

Arrange filled shells on baking dish or cookie sheet. Melt rest of butter and pour over mixture in shells. Place in oven and bake 10 minutes.

Run scallops under broiler until nicely browned on top, about 1 minute.