



FEATURED QUOTE :

"When the world wearies and society fails to satisfy, There is always the garden."

~Minnie Aumonier

Let's Plan A succulent Garden This Winter!

While the snow and cold weather is keeping us out of the garden, let's use this time wisely and plan a unique garden this winter! Let us plan a garden that is filled with unique varieties of sedum, sempervivums, cactus, and yuccas. Yes you have read these first lines of this story properly, because this is a story of plants that will grow in your garden no matter where you live from Michigan to Maine; it's just the cold version of a desert garden. The plants I will tell you about are winter hardy, they are all related, and they will give you great pleasure because you can now plant a traditional desert setting in your back yard no matter where you live--even in my home state of Maine.

I want you to think outside of the gardening box! Look at the extreme, and imagine endless shapes and textures these plants will create in your garden; your expressions of something out of the ordinary. This garden will make gardeners think before they can even speak to you. You will have created something so different from the ordinary, your gardening friends and family will think of you as an artist, not just a gardener.

These four families are members of the Succulent family of plants and have several things in common with each other. Let's begin with swollen leaves that are able to hold water during dry weather even when grown in poor soil. When you look at a yucca plant, you would not think that it had the capability to store water but it is always anticipating that hard times will come and the plant can hold large quantities of water. The Succulent family is known for the rosettes, the ability of holding their leaves close together on a shortened stem. Yucca species have no visible stems but can produce as many as 300 sword-shaped leaves. Hens and chickens are known for the plump leaves that are arranged like an open rose.

Succulents are hardworking and low-maintenance plants for those of us who have limited time to spend in the garden. Insects and disease problems are few, giving these plant additional positive traits. They also have the ability to choke out invasive grasses and plants. They will also outlive most other perennial flowers in your garden; they will live for years in the garden once established--no matter how you treat them. All produce flowers that are cherished by butterflies and other pollinators. Some of the unique varieties will also draw night flying moths and hummingbirds to your garden to increase pollination on all your flowers.

These plants will enhance your garden design because of the hundreds of varieties available for foliage color, foliage texture, plant height, plant color, and flower shape and flower color. Some members have a carpet-like growth habit, some are more mounded or upright growth. Others are grass-like in appearance or even produce as foliage oval shaped pads that are covered with hundreds of sharp and hard-to-remove thorns. But one thing they all love is growing in a southern exposure and well-drained garden soil and, if they have a choice, a sloping garden is better than a level garden.

When they are potted, a porous container is best to prevent water build up during wet periods in the growing season. Never plant succulents in plastic or ceramic containers if you have the choice; your plants will not develop and mature as quickly as they will in clay pots. Wooden containers work very well as they tend to dry up and crack to create extra drainage holes to allow extra water to escape easily. Sedum, sempervivums, and yucca are quite adaptable to most any soil but the cactus is more demanding. If you want a healthy plant with many flowers, the plant must have a conditioned soil when planted in your garden, like a pocket of its own personal soil. One last thing--plants being grown in containers do best when moved indoors, perhaps in a garage or unheated tool shed during the winter months, due to temperature changes and ice buildup in the container; garden-grown plants are not a problem during the winter months

The Sempervivums family known as the hens and chickens is the most popular of the four families because of the hundreds of different sizes of the rosette, color of the rosette, shape of the rosette and special features such as hair

that will grow on the foliage of the rosette. This cobweb-like hair that is white or silver will grow straight up to catch the sunlight, morning dew, and the frost during the fall season. Some varieties also grow inward, giving the foliage a rounded ball shape. Other varieties will grow flat like a star--especially in warm weather. The foliage is always more colorful during the spring months, fades with the heat of summer and returns to bright colors in the fall as the temperatures begin to cool off. The individual plant rosette will range in size from 1 to 6 inches in diameter and the plant can spread to up to 3 feet wide

The sedum family produces foliage that is quite small and spreads like a carpet of beautiful foliage often covering the ground. Plants grow loosely rooted in the garden and the foliage is plump--smooth edged or slightly toothed. Some varieties will produce large quantities of yellow flowers, often covering the plant when in bloom for several weeks during the summer months. Some varieties can also produce white or pink flowers but the flowers are not the main attraction, the evergreen foliage is. The foliage can be light to dark green, silvery blue, yellow, red, maroon, blue gray...and in my garden it creates much interest during the fall months and in the early spring when not many plants have developed yet after the long winter.

My favorite hardy cactus types are the Opuntia hybrids, often called the prickly pear cactus. These plants prefer a moist loamy soil that is well-drained. The plant is a prolific bloomer during the early summer and the flower buds often have a red tint to them as they develop. Many of the flowers will produce red fruits about the size of a golf ball that are eaten by chipmunks and squirrels when they ripen and turn red. In the fall, when the weather begins to turn cold, the plant will slowly begin to fall over and shrivel up; I thought I lost my plants that first fall but when spring arrived the following year, the plant re-inflated and quickly came back to life. The plants grow quickly in the summer, often outgrowing their area in the garden--so just divide them and give them to gardening friends. Warning: the thorns come in clusters and are very small, so when you work around the plant to clean fall leaves or to weed always wear leather gloves or you will spend hours removing the thorns from your hands and arms.

Now, yucca hybrids bring to your garden great foliage color and texture, along with beautiful white flowers on tall strong stems. The foliage will grow from a short strong central stem with hundreds of sword-shaped grass-like leaves that will have a sharp thorn on the end of each leaf. The leaf will grow 12 to 18 inches long and 1 to 1.5 inches wide and taper to the thorny leaf tip. The plant is also evergreen, even in my garden in Maine. Leaf color comes in solid green or variegated green and yellow stripes running down the middle of the leaf. The plant will quickly grow in width in just a couple years. Once well-established, it is capable of sending underground runners that will spread in all direction in your garden. They are easily dug up and removed but you should know this before planting. The flowers resemble bells and are 2 inches in diameter. The flowers will last on the plant for several weeks and hummingbirds love them, along with other pollinators.

So, this winter get out your garden catalogs for hardy perennials and design a garden with these 4 plant families to create a desert garden right in your back yard. Remember that no special soil is required but plants do best when built on a mound of soil to improve the drainage and catch the early spring sun and heat--like a raised bed. Use sand or gravel and lots of interesting shaped stone as a mulch to cover the ground. Large rocks, some garden art, solar powered lighting for great night time shadows, even a cattle head with horns to create interest. Plant your desert garden in clumps or even in waves of plants to create a special look to the planting. If you're doing a large garden the more varieties of plants you select the more beauty your garden will have from spring to fall and remember short growing plants in front and taller growing varieties in the middle.

With hundreds of plants to choose from, don't plant the entire garden the first year--as you may find new and more interesting colorful foliage in the years to come from nurseries you visit or new perennial catalogs. Check the internet for new sources and know the hardiness zone where you live to select the hardiest varieties for your area. If you plant the whole garden the first year, the fun is over--so take your time and be on a constant look-out for new and unusual plants to add to the garden. Pick up garden magazines from the south or the western part of the country for ideas and enjoy.

Planning A Winter Garden

When I was in high school, I worked as a bus boy at the restaurant where my father was the head chef. I spent many hours in the dining room cleaning tables and looking out the many windows into the gardens that were designed to be enjoyed from inside the restaurant. During the day, the gardens were beautiful, at night they were even better with the special lighting in them, but during the winter they were even more spectacular. During the day and at night, thanks to the snow that covered part of the shrubs and large evergreens, many of the plants took on even more character. As I write this story for you, I now realize how important a winter garden is for those of us who are indoors looking out from September to April. Here are some ideas and information for you to consider when you plant your garden to be viewed from inside your home.

The view through the window will provide you with a picture of the gardens around your home and the plantings in the background at a time of the year when inclement weather can make those gardens more exciting to look at. Most of us plan our gardens by looking at the house from the outside, but if you're spending up to 6 months in your home

looking out, this may be the time to make design changes so you can better enjoy those gardens from inside your home looking through the windows.

What should be considered is plant foliage, texture and colors; consider both broadleaf evergreens and needle evergreens. If no foliage, then look at the branching structure, bark color, unique character and growth habit, winter berries and flower bud clusters to give you an ever-changing picture from season to season. Also consider adding portable solar lighting so you can enjoy watching the snow fall during a winter storm and the unique shadows the snow will create in the gardens.

When you're planning a winter window garden select a window where you can sit comfortably-- like the living room, den, or kitchen area where you spend time looking out. I like to first start with the "hardscapes" such as a low picket fence, small stone wall, short evergreen hedge, patio or deck. Next, I want you to add a focal point piece like a weathered stump from the ocean or river, a nice post with a unique looking birdfeeder or bird house on it, even a unusual outside light to illuminate the garden at night to watch the snow fall--that may be more interesting than watching television most nights. A water feature, a bird bath, a sturdy garden bench a piece of garden art, even garden art that moves with the wind, large rocks with interesting texture or color, even a piece of local history like a ships anchor, lobster traps, short pieces of telephone poles covered with large pieces of rope to give your garden a nautical look with old lanterns mounted on them and eliminated at night, or an old row boat filled with garden plants as a planter... It's all up to your IMAGINATION. Even a place to set up a cut Christmas tree in the garden to decorate and light up for the holidays could be enjoyed from inside the house.

Your ground could be covered with bark mulch or interesting stones for additional character, or stone, brick or cobblestone walkways could be included if the space is large enough for this type of feature. How about adding a garden flagpole or a fire pit that could be used during a snow storm and viewed from inside the house. Garden statuary could create a special theme, such as oriental or whimsical, to the garden. This garden could also be used according to the season and during the holidays in fall you add decorations like corn stalks, pumpkins, squash, mums, and scare crows. Halloween with ghosts and goblins and re-decorated for the Christmas holidays, it could be lot of fun and enjoyment for you and the family.

Now how about plant material for this garden--winter foliage! Winter foliage can be surprisingly rich and eye-catching but more subtle than the foliage of the summer. Winter colors are more muted but the colors are beautiful with rich reds, silver, blue, and tans. Also many shades of yellows, greens and some variegated foliage can be introduced to create a pleasing picture to your winter garden.

In the red foliage category, think about such plants as *Mahonia aquifolium*--Oregon grape holly-- with glowing shades of reddish purple. *Leucothoe axillaris*, with rich red foliage, Rhododendron PJM, with burgundy-red foliage--and as a ground cover, ajuga and coral bells.

In the yellow foliage category, think of fortunei 'Emerald and Gold' or 'Blondie,' gold and green variegated leaf English ivy, several varieties of cypress, arborvitae, gold tip junipers and *Chamaecyparis*. Also, for areas south of Boston, plants like variegated green and yellow leaf holy, *Aucuba japonica*. On the ground, think about coral bells vinca vines and heather.

In the silver foliage category, think about unique members of the Juniper family, Fir family and the Chamaecyparis family and the *Pieris japonica* 'Little Heath,' and *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety.' Also some great perennials like *Carex conica* 'Snowline,' (a great ornamental grass), variegated pachysandra and English ivy, lamium 'White Nancy' and more.

In the brown and orange category, think about ornamental grasses hybrids, heath, and heathers, *Microbiota decussata* (a type of juniper which I have in one of my gardens and love). Also, hybrid *Chamaecyparis* and ground covers like coral bells and *Epimedium*--a wonderful and delicate groundcover.

In the silver-blue category, think about juniper hybrids like 'Blue Chip,' 'Blue Rug,' and 'Blue Star' and 'Sky Rocket' types. Ornamental grasses, blue spruce, voncolor fir, and Chamaecyparis hybrids also have great winter color. And there are great perennials for foliage that has gone dormant--like santolina, ornamental grasses, ajuga, and hardy sedums.

In the green category, think about azaleas, mountain laurel, rhododendron, boxwood, Japanese and mountain Andromeda, and also needle evergreens like yews, arborvitae, pine, hemlock, euonymus, heath, and heathers. As ground covers, look at pachysandra, English or Baltic ivy, euonymus, vinca and hardy winter sedums and cactus.

Deciduous plants (those plants that are without foliage) think about the colorful stems and twigs of plants like red or yellow stem dogwood, the red twigs on cotoneaster, The flowering plum family with wonderful red bark, birches with wonderful white papery bark that flakes from the tree, and the 'Golden' weeping willow trees.

Now also consider berries from the flowering trees like crabapples, mountain ash, and holly. Wonderful shrubs like pyracantha, viburnum, barberry, bayberry, cotoneaster and even privet will give you wonderful winter color and encourage birds to frequent this garden that is meant to be enjoyed from inside the house at all times of the year. The winter months are the best time to begin planning this garden for next winter of next year. So tonight sit by the winter window and start planning your new garden that will be planted this spring or summer. You won't be sorry when the snow flies next year and you're nice and warm, looking out the window and enjoying the new garden.

Deer Proofing Your Property

The more you know about deer and the factors that attract them to your property, the better chance you have of controlling the problem. Knowing what appeals to them when it comes to ornamental shrubs, trees, flowers and vegetables is the key to preventing problems down the road. The more you select plants that they do not prefer now, the better chance you will have of avoiding problems and protecting the plant that they do prefer later.

The first year I planted my vegetable garden I was lucky because everything grew and I had no problems with deer eating my plants. Each year I expanded the size of the garden and added new vegetable varieties and that was when the problems started. It was July about 5 years ago, a time of the year I did not expect to have a problem, as the garden was growing quickly and I thought there was food for all of nature creatures growing in the wild. It was also 3 days before the garden tour of my property when over one thousand people were expected to view my gardens...when the deer arrived for their own visit to sample and taste the garden.

My garden is rectangular, and I plant everything in rows from one side to the other. As I dragged the hose and sprinkler to the garden to water it, I noticed that the beginning and end of the row of peas was shorter than the middle. That was something I had never noticed before; on closer inspection I saw that the plants close to the outer edge of the garden had been eaten during the night. I started to look around and noticed that the cold weather crops like broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower had also been sampled but the Swiss chard row had been eaten right to the ground--just 2" shoots remained.

The deer had come into my garden to taste and they had sampled everything--even the squash, peppers and tomatoes--to my horror. I knew that they would be back that night to feed on their favorite vegetables and they would bring friends with them, so I was in real trouble! If I did not stop them at the vegetable garden they would find the flower gardens and then the shrubs around the house...what was I to do?

I had a few options starting with purchasing a gun and spending the night out in the garden waiting for them to return--not a good idea--but how about animal repellents, would they work? Off to the garden center I went to purchase Deer Scram and Shake-Away Deer Repellent to save my garden and (hopefully) motivate them not to return. I applied both products to the garden, one on one side and the other on the other side of the garden just to see if one was better than the other. In the morning I awoke early and headed out to the garden and found that only minor damage had occurred on untreated plants that they had not touched the night before but the treated plants had not been touched, success!

I treated the rest of the garden and the flower gardens close by and the problem went away (I thought) until September, when they returned to eat the cold weather crops again. In the fall food is less available and they are hungrier, so they returned to my garden--good memory on their part. Out came the deer repellents and the feeding stopped, so I could enjoy my fall vegetables. So now what I do is plant the outside edges of the garden with vegetables they do not prefer and the ones they love go in the middle of the garden, with fewer problems. I still have to use animal repellents every now and then but when I see a problem developing, I apply at the first sign of the problem and the deer seem to move on.

The deer slowly found the flower gardens so I started to plant fuzzy leaf plants and plants with prickly foliage in those gardens to discourage them. Next I planted daffodils and monkshood perennials as they are toxic to animals and it helped a bit more. Then I read a story how they did not like strong aromatic plants-- especially herbs--so I added herbs to the garden and it helped even more. Try herbs like mint, thyme, sage, oregano and rosemary; they worked for me.

Next move was to purchase a book about deer-resistant plants. Now the deer are seldom seen in my yard, since I have added many of the recommended plants to the gardens. Such plants as bee balm, bleeding hearts, coreopsis, delphinium, evening primrose, globe thistle, and hellebores have been interplanted in the gardens with great results, and there are many plants for you to choose from.

I will tell you that fences, repellents and plant selection are the major ways to keep uninvited animals from destroying your garden--but if the weather is severe enough for them not to find food, they will eat most anything to survive--even plants that are recommended to keep them out. A few years back when the snow got real deep and food was scarce, they ate my holly shrubs right in front of the house; those plants had been there for 20 years and had never been touched. Out came the repellents and the feeding stopped! Do your research and pick up a copy of *Deer-Resistant Landscaping*, by Neil Soderstrom, for extra help. Knowledge is the key to survival.

The Paul Parent Garden Club is pleased to announce that we are back on in Cape Cod, Massachusetts! For those of you have been faithful listeners in the area, and found that we were off the air, we are back on radio station: WBSM AM 1420 9:00-11:00 a.m. Sundays.

You can hear us from Brockton, MA down the Cape to Provincetown, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and Providence Rhode Island. We are extremely delighted to be back on in your area!

We have more than just Cape Cod, for those of you who have had trouble getting the show. We would like to welcome our listeners on the following new stations:

WDRC	HARTFORD, CT	AM1360	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WMMW	MERIDAN, CT	AM1470	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WSNG	TORRINGTON, CT	AM 610	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WWCO	WATERBURY, CT	AM 1240	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WKBK	KEENE, NH	AM 1290	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WKBK	KEENE, NH	FM 104.1	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WGSV	GUNTERSVILLE, AL	AM 1150	5 TO 8 a.m. CST
WAUB	AUBURN, NY	AM 1590	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WAUB	AUBURN, NY	FM 98.1	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WGVA	GENEVA, NY	AM 1240	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WGVA	GENEVA, NY	FM 96.1	8 TO 10 a.m. EST
WBSM	NEW BEDFORD, MA	AM 1420	9 TO 11 a.m. EST

We are glad to be back on Cape Cod and on our other new stations. We are privileged to help you prepare your garden for the spring ahead!

Alaska Trip

Vancouver, BC

- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!
- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising
- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park

- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

Trivia

This Week's Question

The All-America Rose Selections (AARS) tests roses and declares Rose(s) of the Year each year. For what year did they give their first awards?

1929

1937

1940

1946

1952

This Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

All Natural Plant Food Enhanced with Bacteria and Mycorrhizae

- Microbe-enhanced all natural plant food
- Includes both endo and ecto mycorrhizae
- Grows larger root mass to help plants establish fast
- Promotes bigger blooms
- Reduces transplant loss

Which of the following plants does NOT have edible (by humans) flowers?

- A. Azalea
- B. Calendula
- C. Chrysanthemum
- D. Marigold
- E. Nasturtium

Last Week's Winner:

Luke Beals

Last Week's Answer:

A. Azalea

Last Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

One winner per question - we choose winners from the list of those who answer correctly. Winners must be newsletter subscribers. We'll ship you your prize, so be sure to put your address in the form in case you win!



Featured Recipe: Slow Cooker French Dip

What You'll Need:

- 4 pounds rump roast (make sure it will fit in your crockpot)
- 1 (10.5 ounce) can beef broth
- 1 (10.5 ounce) can condensed French onion soup
- 1 (12 ounce) can or bottle **dark** beer (stout recommended)
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder (or to taste)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 6 French or hoagie rolls
- Approx. 2 tablespoons butter
- Optional: sliced provolone cheese

Step by Step:

- Trim any excess fat from the rump roast, and place in a slow cooker.
- Add the broth, onion soup, garlic powder, salt, pepper and beer (tip: if you don't have stout or want a deeper flavor, add some browning sauce--like Kitchen Bouquet).
- Cook on low for 8 hours. (Cooking time may vary depending on crockpot.)
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Split the rolls, and spread with butter (and/or cheese).
- Bake until heated through and cheese is melted.
- Slice the meat on the diagonal, and place on the rolls.
- Put sauce in bowls for dipping.