

## News Article

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## Consider a Garden Journal

The older I get, the harder it is for me to remember what year something happened in my landscape or garden. I should have written things down. Perhaps I, and you, too, should consider starting a garden journal.

I have heard speakers over the years laud the benefits of a garden journal. I have interacted with homeowners who have kept garden journals that recorded weather conditions, pest problems, and other observances. This record, of course, was very helpful as we dealt with the situation at hand.

I find that those who keep a garden or landscape journal typically find the experience rewarding. As the chronicler of their experiences, they begin to see what worked, and what did not work, trends in pest problems, bloom times from year to year, and other observations. They become keener observers of plant growth, leading to better understanding of botanical science. Some even record thoughts, ideas and feelings associated with gardening.

The type of journal is up to the individual. If all you need are records of fertilizer, pest treatments, planting dates, weather events and vegetable yields, a simple notebook or composition book will suffice. Some may prefer calendars to write things in on various dates. You may prefer to utilize a computer, tablet or your phone. You can also purchase a garden journal at a bookstore.

I ran across a recent article by Penn State University Extension, in which they suggested some key information you should record in a garden journal. I've thrown in some of my ideas, too.

1. Vegetable garden information - Plan your upcoming garden using seed catalogs you get this winter, and recollections from the past year. What grew well and what tasted best? Did you save any seeds from heirloom plants? Where in your garden did you plant vegetables? Make a map and record last year's layout so that you can rotate crops next year. Make a plan for next year.
2. Landscape beds – Sketch out each landscape bed and identify each plant. What date were plants installed? Where would you like to enhance your landscape bed with color or foliage? Do your landscape plants work well in their current configuration? What annuals would you like to try in the coming year? Do your colors work aesthetically? What about bloom times – can you install plants that will deliver blooms most of the year? Do plants need divided?
3. Seasonal landmarks – Do you record frost and freeze dates? When did flowers bloom? When was the first good stretch of warmer weather? When did soil temperatures in the root zone

reach 50 degrees? When did hummingbirds arrive? When did certain pests arrive? When did you prune or deadhead? When did you dig tender bulbs for winter storage?

4. Regular gardening activities – Document all the “nuts-and-bolts” of planting, fertilizing, watering, etc. What date did you plant? What dates did you harvest? What was the yield? Were there times when rainfall was inadequate and you had to water? What went wrong? What mistakes were made? Based on what went wrong, or mistakes that were made, what ideas do you have for improvement next year?
5. Budget – a journal helps you keep record of expenditures, including cost, where you bought it, and the date. It’s not a bad idea to hold onto receipts. Many vegetable gardeners don’t raise vegetables because they think they will save money; they garden because they can raise what they want, using the methods they prefer, to get the product they prefer. They also may enjoy the exercise and the overall experience.

For the artsy types, you may derive some pleasure in illustrating your journal, or including clippings from magazines. You may want to insert articles you have read from reputable sources. Find many great Purdue Extension resources online at: [www.edustore.purdue.edu](http://www.edustore.purdue.edu).

Finally, as you develop your journal, take time to review past years. See if you can notice trends, or why plants did not perform as well as in previous years, or why they may have out-performed previous years. Have fun with it and make it your own!