



Spring

HOME & GARDEN

A Special Supplement To: The Malone Telegram April 2023



Gardening can sharpen your power of attention

By **CATIE MARRON**

Washington Post

I often keep a single flower in a small bottle on my desk, where I can enjoy it. I learn a lot from studying that flower's cycle.

It's an idea I got from the philosopher and author Alain de Botton, who once remarked that we unfairly dismiss museum postcards of prominent paintings. "Our culture sees them as tiny, pale shadows of the far superior originals hanging on the walls a few metres away," he observed, "but the encounter we have with the postcard may be deeper, more perceptive and more valuable to us, because the card allows us to bring our own reactions to it."

A flower in a bottle may seem similarly insignificant compared to a full bouquet or a flower bed, but as with the postcard, that single flower invites us to study every detail more deeply. Even over just a few days, the changes are breathtaking. I've witnessed the magic of a peony going from hot pink to pale coral, watched a tulip's petals double in size and seen a rose clinging to the last glimmers of its fading bloom.

Over time, studying these flowers has helped me acquire what other gardeners have referred to as "gardener's eyes." One of my favorite gardeners-writers, Penelope Lively, described this skill as "extra vision — gardening vision ... you see the world with gardening eyes, you see what is growing where, you appreciate and assess and you wonder what that is if it is unfamiliar." It was a new sensibility for me, one I didn't have before I began gardening seriously and closely observing these single blooms on my desk.

Once I started digging in the dirt, I noticed ecosystems I had

taken for granted. I'd pause to study a surprising color combination on a single flower or a mix of plants. I'd catch myself mid-stride if I recognized a plant but it looked different from similar varieties I'd seen

See **SHARPEN 3**



You can learn a lot by studying the life cycle of a flower, author Catie Marron says. Pexels

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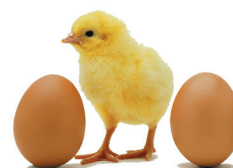
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Sharpen

From 2

before. Soon, looking carefully at plant life became a habit.

Much has been written and said about gardening's practical health benefits, and those effects are real and important. But less is shared about the way that gardening can reshape what you notice, and how that can impact your days. Gardener's eyes can lead you to gaze at the texture of turf, the imaginative plantings on a brownstone stoop, the splendor of a February cherry blossom. Or as Lively put it, "The physical world has a new eloquence."

The best thing about garden-er's eyes is that you bring them

with you everywhere — and everywhere there is something to see. I've been awed by the great, formal gardens I've visited, but I've been just as absorbed by my own modest vegetable garden, where plant growth and renewal always offer something new to capture my attention.

Well-developed gardener's eyes can also make you aware of how little you know, a feeling shared by the renowned garden designer Beth Chatto, who experienced this during a visit to Benton End, the home and gardens of Sir Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett-Haines. Morris was an artist-gardener who crafted "a bewildering, mind-stretching, eye-widening canvas of color, textures and shapes, created primarily with bulbous and herbaceous plants," Chatto said in "Hortus Revisited," edited by David

Wheeler. In time, she appreciated it as "the finest collection of such plants in the country."

Not right away though. "But that first afternoon, there were far too many unknown plants for me to see, let alone recognize," she wrote. "You may look, but you will not see, without knowledge to direct your mind." That's how I felt in my first gardening forays: I was looking, but not seeing. After years of reading about plants and simply spending more time in gardens big and small, I was able to see more clearly.

That vision didn't only come by watching plant life. I also learned to watch gardeners themselves. That was based, in part, on the unexpected advice of Tom Coward, the head gardener of Gravetye Manor in Sussex, England. I once bumped into Coward while

walking around Gravetye. At that time, I was a new gardener, and I asked if he had any tips for a fresh practitioner of the craft. His guidance: Find a knowledgeable gardener, and watch what they do.

It seems like simple wisdom, but it's powerful nonetheless. If you are new to gardening and feel confused, visit more gardens, spend an afternoon at your local nursery and talk to the gardeners. Ask questions and listen to their stories. Gardeners tend to be unfailingly patient and generous, because they too had to learn the trade in the same slow and circuitous

manner. They know the feeling of gardeners' eyes moving from muddled to clear.

But if you can't watch a gardener or visit a garden right away, then perhaps start the way I did: with a single flower, kept close. There's a library locked within those petals, an invitation to develop your own gardener's eyes — and forever change how you see the world around you.

Catie Marron is the author of "Becoming a Gardener: What Reading and Digging Taught Me About Living."



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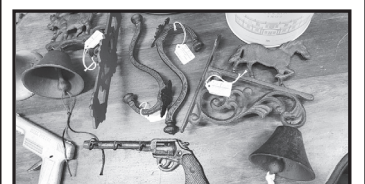


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Keep these aggressive growers out of your garden

By **TOVAH MARTIN**

Washington Post

Call them what you want: aggressive. Opportunistic. Energetic. They expand quickly and push out their neighbors. They show up uninvited elsewhere on your property or in your neighbors' yards. They are plants, and they're rude.

We've all heard of "invasive species," the nonnative plants that can harm the environment or human health. These species vary by region and are tracked on official lists. But what about the plants that aren't technically invasive, but are just plain undesirable? Unless you have a lot of

space to devote to them, bringing these garden hogs home might be a bad idea.

As a lifelong gardener based in New England, my personal list of banned flora is expansive and begins with bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*). Although some cultivars are said to be less energetic, the species has taken over my property.

Also high on my "not in my garden" list is gooseneck loosestrife (*Lysimachia clethroides*), a temptingly pretty plant with arching flower spires that overruns everything else. Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), from the same family, cov-

ers the ground with a thick mat of round leaves that nothing can penetrate. English ivy is another rambler (with tenacious suction cup-like roots along its branches). I've also had run-ins with tansy, tradescantia, cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*) and *Anemone canadensis*, to mention only a handful.

Identifying unfit plants might require some research and observation. Labels are not apt to say "does not play well with others" or "adopt at your own risk" or "prepare to spend the rest of your life engaged in hand-to-



Gooseneck loosestrife is beautiful and bountiful, but also knows no bounds. [Extension.umass.edu](https://extension.umass.edu)

See **DIY 7**

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Create your native plant garden

Metro

Gardening is a worthwhile endeavor that not only passes the time, but can be a form of exercise and relief from the daily grind. Gardens also provide ample opportunity to experiment, as individuals can produce everything from vegetables to bountiful blooms.

Recent years have witnessed a growing emphasis on eco-friendly gardening that aims to reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides in an effort to protect the planet. One way to do so is to rely on native plants.

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

Native plants are indigenous

to particular regions. The National Wildlife Federation says native plants grow in habitats without human introduction or intervention. Native plants have formed symbiotic relationships with local wildlife over thousands of years, which the NWF notes makes them the most sustainable options. Native plants help the environment and thrive with little supplemental watering or chemical nutrients.

Native plants vary by region. In arid climates, certain succulents may be native because they don't need much rainfall to thrive. In lush wetlands, succulents might be out of place.

START NATIVE PLANTING

The NWF offers native plants for 36 different states that can be shipped right to customers' doors to help replenish native varieties. In addition, gardeners can visit local gardening centers to select native plants. Small and



NATIVES VARY BY REGION

See NATIVE 11

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Bite back against Lyme disease

Metro

Among the tall grasses and wildflowers that sprout each spring and summer lies a stealth predator just waiting for its chance at an easy meal. Ticks may be small in stature, but their impact on bite victims is potentially significant. Preventing Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses comes down to following some key steps.

■ Learn how common Lyme disease is. Lyme disease affects an estimated 476,000 people each year in the United States alone, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. Lyme disease is most common in New England, the mid-Atlantic states and the upper Midwest. Between 2009 and 2022, the Government of Canada

reported 17,080 human cases of Lyme disease across Canada. However, instances of Lyme disease are likely underreported due to undiagnosed cases.

■ Know which ticks carry Lyme disease. The black-legged deer tick and the Western black-legged tick carry the Lyme disease spirochete. The black-legged tick is native to the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and north-central U.S., while the western black-legged tick is found on the Pacific coast.

■ Wear light-colored clothing outdoors. When traveling in areas where ticks reside, it is important to wear light-colored clothing. Long pants and tall socks, long-sleeved shirts, and hats also should be worn. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing, and covering up

prevents ticks from gaining easy access to skin.

■ Know where to expect ticks.

John's Hopkins Medicine says black-legged ticks live in moist and humid environments, par-

ticularly in and near wooded or

See LYME 11

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DIY

From T4

hand combat.” Trusted garden centers, nurseries, fellow gardeners and professionals can offer advice. I suggest researching unfamiliar plants before installing them in your garden, especially where space is limited.

It's worth noting, though, the United States is a big country and plants that pose problems in one region could be fine in other areas. And remember: Even these aggressive plants can be tamed, in the right hands. Garden designers with plenty of experience with soils and plant habits might use them in places where they need to cover large expanses of ground, or where the plants can compete with other aggressive species.

I asked several garden designers to share their most unwanted lists with me, including Richard Hartlage of Land Morphology in Seattle; garden designer Donald Pell in Pennsylvania; and Edwina von Gal, a garden designer based on Long Island as well as founder and board chair of the Perfect Earth Project. Hartlage suggested a general test of a plant's aggressiveness. “If your neighbor has lots and lots of divisions to share, maybe you don't want that plant,” he says.

Mints are frequent offenders,

and they top many gardeners' lists of undesirables. In particular, spearmint and peppermint are energetic, persistent spreaders when planted in a landscape, but apple mint and other varieties can also go rogue. “Use those mints as container plants,” suggests Hartlage, “but don't put them in the ground.”

Plenty of landscapers also avoid plume poppy (*Macleaya cordata*). “It's a beautiful plant, but way too much trouble,” von Gal says of this tall perennial with glovelike foliage, which was popular in historic landscapes and can lie dormant for decades. Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) also knows no bounds. “That plant just wants to take over,” says Pell. Other goldenrods, however, might be more appropriate for gardens.

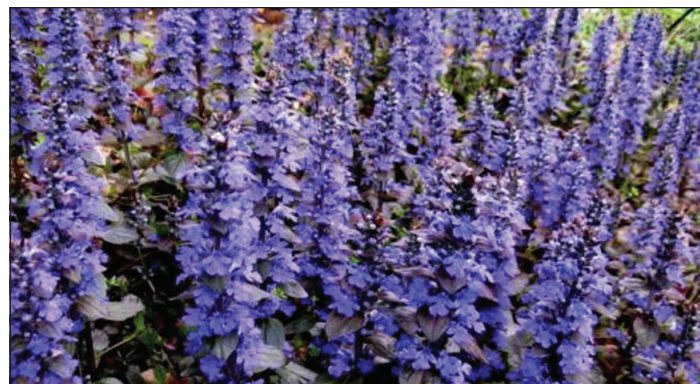
Mints, plume poppies and goldenrods increase primarily by sending wandering runners (rhizomes) to expand their territory, a common multiplication method for overly energetic plants.

Ornamental grasses, on the other hand, often use seed dispersal to expand. Silver grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*), which is on invasive lists in many states but still frequently sold in nurseries, is a classic example of a grass that doesn't work well in gardens because of its rapid growth via seeds. Hartlage also finds that Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) can spread quick-

ly by seed in warm zones (but self-seeding might not be an issue where this grass is not hardy).

I also have found that morning glories can be a nightmare because of overly prolific seed sowing. Although “Heavenly Blue” (*Ipomoea tricolor*) has never self-seeded in my New England garden, other morning glory varieties continue to pop up annually. I've learned to identify the seedlings and remove them before they begin another generation.

I could continue to call out inappropriate garden plants; the list is lengthy. A wise strategy would be to monitor new plants in the garden. If something begins to overstep its bounds, curb it swiftly. Pulling aggressive plants early is better than taking



he blue flowers of bugleweed are pretty, but don't plant it where you don't want it to roam. Ebay.com

a wait-and-see approach. And do not make the mistake of sending aggressive plants to your compost pile, where they can continue to multiply.

Then, share your experiences with fellow gardeners. Spread

the word, rather than the plants.

Tovah Martin is a gardener and freelance writer in Connecticut. Find her online at tovahmartin.com.

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4 colorful DIY projects you can create with a gallon of paint

By **KRISTIN LUNA**

Washington Post

When Racheal Jackson bought her 1978 fixer-upper in Vancouver, Wash., she considered the wood-accented house a blank canvas waiting to be made over with color. The designer and artist took it one room at a time: painting a mural here, creating a piece of art there. Before she knew it, her house was an amalgamation of smaller projects, most of them accomplished with paint.

Her motto, "It's just paint," also has colored the work she's done on clients' homes. "Does your room feel uninspired? Paint it," advises the founder of Banyan Bridges, a mural and interior-design service. (Jackson also co-hosts the series "Artfully Designed" on Discovery+.) "We live bolder lives when we surround ourselves with bold design, so ... just try it on. Paint your wall fuchsia!"

Maggie McGaugh, a home-renovation Instagrammer and self-proclaimed "dumpster diver," agrees with Jackson's "go bold" approach. For the past few years, the Texas creative has shared her adventures rehabbing discarded furniture with more

than 500,000 followers. Sometimes the slightest changes can make the largest impact, McGaugh says.

Want to give your own DIY project a go? Jackson, McGaugh and other design experts share some of their favorite home-refresh ideas, all requiring nothing more than a single gallon of paint.

1. DESIGN A COLOR-BLOCK MURAL

Jackson's signature are her whimsical, color-blocked murals, which also happen to be an ideal paint project for newbies.

Using a variety of different size brushes and painter's tape, Jackson has created these vivid murals in homes across the country. For simple designs, she says DIYers can use their phones to take a photo of the wall and use the editing function to sketch the design, to determine placement and scale.

For a more complicated mural, you could use an app such as Procreate to sketch out your idea first, then project it onto the wall and trace over it with pencil or chalk. Often, you'll need a few coats of paint on each block to achieve full coverage. If you're

using several colors, buy sample sizes or quarts for each section, rather than a whole gallon. Jackson recommends paint with a matte finish.

To prevent the sections from bleeding into each other, tape off the design (pressing along the tape with a credit card or something similar to make sure it's tight against the wall), then paint your base color over the whole area, including over the tape. Once the base color dries, apply your



Mint Chip Mural by Racheal Jackson of Banyan Bridges.

See **DIY 9** Banyanbridges.com

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DIY

From 8

next color over the top. When you remove the tape, your design should be crisp.

2. BUILD A MONOCHROMATIC GALLERY WALL

Colson Horton, an interior and prop stylist, says that if you aren't ready to paint an entire wall, tackling a more manageable project such as a grouping of picture frames can give a space personality with minimal effort.

"If you want to spruce up a room, why not paint your wooden frames a half shade darker or lighter than your wall color to create a clean, monochromatic look?" she says.

To achieve such a look, sand each frame, then prime before painting. Using a sprayer will give the cleanest finish, Horton says. "Make sure not to be too close to the frame to avoid drips, and allow the paint to dry fully between layers. I have rushed this process before and I always regret it, so take your time!"

For added dimension, she suggests using a different sheen of paint on your frames than what is on your wall, or adding contrasting mats "for a little extra punch of playfulness."

3. STENCIL ON FAUX WALLPAPER

The application and semi-permanence of wallpaper is daunting to many homeowners. If that includes you, interior designer Isabel Ladd suggests emulating the look and feel of patterned paper with paint instead.

"What looks like wallpaper [can] actually be done with a gallon of paint and stencils," says the founder of Isabel Ladd Interiors in Lexington, Ky. In rooms with odd dimensions, the method can work much better than traditional paper. "This was especially necessary in a bathroom [I designed] with quirky sized walls where everything was crooked," Ladd says. "We had better command of the design using paint and a stencil than we would have papering the walls."

You can find handmade stencils on Etsy or buy a set at your local craft store. Or, find a pattern that you love, print it out and cut your own stencil from blank stencil sheets. Use blue painter's tape to hold the stencil in place, Ladd says, and start in the middle of the wall, then work your way out on either side to ensure symmetry and even spacing. Ladd also recommends investing in a stencil brush, "as they are flat and great for this application."

To prevent the paint from bleeding beyond the stencil borders, don't oversaturate your paint brush. "If you need more coverage, wait until the first layer

of paint is dry, then use the guidelines on the stencil to line up the design again, and proceed with your next layer," she advises. "Use a fine painter's brush to clean up any spots or errors."

4. UPCYCLE DISCARDED FURNITURE

Keeping an old piece of furniture out of a landfill can be as easy as slicking on a fresh coat of paint, McGaugh says. The results are al-

most always rewarding and, if you find discarded items on sidewalks and in dumpsters as she does, the project is practically free.

"Last year, I found a dresser on the side of the road that was missing three drawers," she recalls, "so I cut off [the parts for] the missing drawers, painted it black and turned it into a mid-century modern entryway bench."

If it's your first time working with furniture, McGaugh rec-

ommends starting small — and with something you already own. "Don't overwhelm yourself," she says. A beginner project could be as simple as spray painting a set of patio furniture, she adds, but always prep your piece first. "Sanding is the best way to ensure the paint will stick, regardless of the type. . . . Sealing also helps protect it."



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The basics of fertilizing a lawn

Spring marks the return of lawn and garden season. Lawns often bear the brunt of winter's wrath, so spring is a great time to nurse them back to health, and fertilizing can be an essential component of that process.

Fertilizing a lawn can be intimidating. An array of fertilizers, with each seemingly designed to address a different issue, can make homeowners' heads spin when visiting their local lawn and garden center. However, fertilizing is a very simple task that any homeowner can tackle. In fact, fears about fertilizing are often unfounded and can be overcome with some basic knowledge of the process.

■ Identify which type of grass is in the yard. The home improvement experts at HGTV note that turfgrass is divided into two categories: cool-season grass and warm-season grass. A local lawn and garden center can help homeowners identify which type of grass is in the yard, and this often depends on location. Fescue, bluegrass and perennial ryegrass are some examples of cool-season grasses, while Bermuda, bahia, St. Augustine, and zoysia are considered warm-season grasses. Identifying which type of grass is in the lawn is important because that will indicate when to fertilize. Cool-season grasses are typically best fertilized in early spring, while warm-season lawns can benefit from an application just before especially warm temperatures arrive.

■ Survey the lawn to identify which spreader to use. A small yard

or a thriving lawn with only a few bald or unsightly patches may not need a full application of fertilizer. In such instances, a hand spreader can suffice. For larger lawns and areas, a broadcast spreader is the ideal option. Spreaders have multiple settings, and the fertilizer package will indicate which setting to utilize when using the product.

■ Test the soil prior to purchasing fertilizer. The lawn experts at Pennington note that a simple soil test can reveal soil pH and phosphorous and potassium levels. Soil tests can be purchased at most home improvement stores and lawn and garden centers, and they can help homeowners determine which fertilizer will most benefit their lawns.

■ Water the lawn prior to fertilizing. The experts at Scotts recommend a good watering a few days prior to fertilizing a lawn. Such an approach ensures the soil is ready to accept the fertilizer once it's applied.

■ Follow the instructions carefully. Detailed instructions are typically provided on fertilizer product packaging. Once homeowners have identified and purchased the product they need, they can simply follow the instructions on the packaging, including how and when to water after application, which can make fertilizing less intimidating.

Fertilizing in spring can help a lawn recover from the previous summer and winter, ensuring it's lush and green when summer entertaining season arrives.



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Native

From 5

independently owned centers often feature knowledgeable local staff whose expertise can prove invaluable to individuals seeking native varieties.

It's important to keep in mind that native varieties may look less cultivated than more exotic blooms and foliages designed to sell for their unique appearances. Wildflowers and native grasses may be the types of native plants found in abundance, which may grow up and out quickly. These other tips can help the process.

■ Plan and prepare the site by re-

moving weeds and turning over the soil. This will give seedlings an opportunity to take root without competition from weeds. Seedlings will give gardens a faster head-start than waiting around for seeds to germinate. However, gardeners can start seeds indoors and then move them outside once they are seedlings.

■ Avoid planting native plants in

rows, as that's not how they're likely to grow naturally. Vary the placement so the plants look like they sprouted up haphazardly.

■ Gardeners can still exert some control over native gardens prone to growing a little wild. Borders and paths can better define the growing areas.

■ Grow Native!, an initiative from

the Missouri Prairie Foundation, suggests planting two to four species in broad sweeping masses or drifts. Mix grasses with flowering plants. The grasses produce dense, fibrous roots that can prevent weed growth.

Native plants should require minimal care. Keep an eye on them and supplement with water if conditions have been especially dry.

Lyme

From 6

grassy areas. Walking through leaves and bushes or through tall grasses can disturb ticks and enable them to jump onto people or pets. To avoid ticks, walk in the center of trails and avoid tall vegetation.

■ Be mindful of pets. Even if you do not venture outdoors into tick-laden environments, your dog may. He or she can carry ticks into the house where they may end up on you or other family members. Prescription tick repellent products are available from veterinarians, and there are topical solutions and collars that can keep ticks away.

■ Remove ticks quickly and correctly. The CDC says if a tick

is removed in less than 24 hours from when it first attached, the chances of getting Lyme disease is very small. Remove a tick with fine-tipped tweezers as soon as it is noticed, being cautious to remove all mouth parts. Try not to squeeze the tick, as it can regurgitate saliva and other fluids when squeezed.

■ Repel ticks when possible. Create less favorable conditions for ticks. Use a product containing DEET or permethrin on clothing to repel ticks. Some people use chemical-control agents on their properties to reduce the number of ticks in the yard. Discourage deer from the property, as they can carry many ticks, by erecting fences and removing vegetation that deer eat.

Various strategies can help people reduce their risk for Lyme disease.

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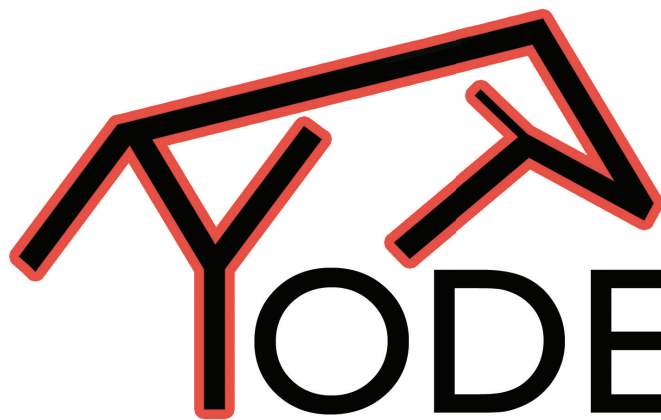
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