

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Avoid sending certain parts of your garden’s produce to the compost heap

Are you tossing a potential meal into the compost heap? Most gardeners grow crops for one specific part of the plant, but overlook a lot of the harvest’s delicious potential. Willi Galloway, author of *Grow Cook Eat: A Food Lover’s Guide to Vegetable Gardening*, is a master gardener and seasoned veggie vigilante. Nothing gets past her on the way to the compost heap—unless there’s good reason. Here, she shares some of her more unusual (and delicious) waste-saving tips:

Root vegetables

While many people are familiar with beet greens, the tops of any root crop is a potential dish. Radish tops might have a “Velcro-like” texture but are delicious cooked. Turnip tops have a strong, mustard taste, so pick them while they’re about the size of your palm, and treat them like spinach. Add them raw to a salad or steam lightly for a side dish. Rutabaga tops are another spinach substitute. With thicker leaves, they take a bit longer to cook but are still tasty. Even carrot tops are edible. While they don’t make a good side dish, their parsley-like flavour is a pleasant addition to any dish where you would add the herb. Galloway likes finely chopped carrot tops stirred into hummus with some olive oil, or added to a carrot root stir-fry.

Broccoli, cauliflower and kohlrabi

Since they’re all from the cruciferous family, it’s no surprise the leaves from broccoli, cauliflower and kohlrabi taste like their cabbage cousin—they can even be used as a direct substitute. “Consider the leaves a back-up crop for broccoli and cauliflower,” Galloway says. “If the head doesn’t grow, eat the leaves.”

Coriander seeds

While you can wait for the seeds to turn brown, coriander’s fresh green seeds provide a delightful, light citrus flavour. Pick the seeds while

they’re still glossy and green. Then purée them into a marinade, or infuse them into vodka for a fresh take on the classic vodka-tonic.

BOOK REVIEW:

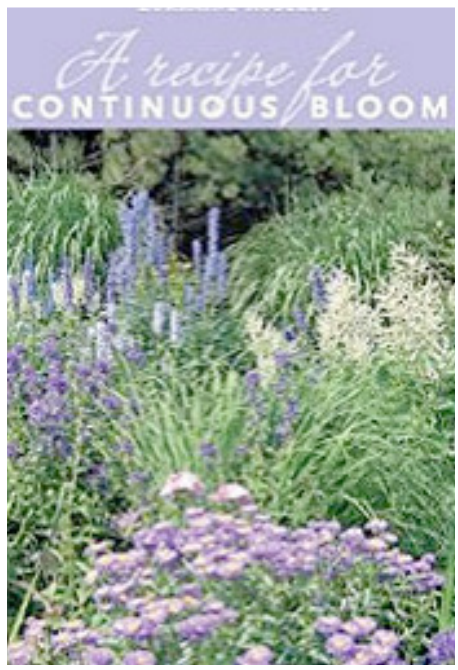
A RECIPE FOR CONTINUOUS BLOOM

By Lorraine Roberts

A delightful read that helps gardeners of all levels choose the most colourful plants throughout the blooming season.

All gardeners strive for it: a garden of continuous bloom, from the first snowdrop in spring to the last gasp of whatever flower lingers on as winter approaches. Few of us achieve it. *A Recipe for Continuous Bloom* tells us how to choose perennials for a garden bursting with colour throughout the seasons. This book is not text-intensive. In fact, Roberts takes up only two pages at the beginning of the book to offer her “recipe” for continual bloom in the garden. It is succinct, but gets the job done.

The rest of the book is divided into three sections. Two sections are devoted to growing conditions; Full Sun/Part Shade and Full Shade/Part Shade. They are further subdivided by bloom times starting with March/April and ending with September/October. Within these sections each perennial (287 in all) has its own page featuring a full-colour photograph along with the plant’s height, width and zone hardiness. The third section is a Plant Guide suggesting various lists of perennials for specific purposes, for example, plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds and beneficial insects, deer-resistant perennials and more. What makes this book unique? The strength of this book lies in its organization. It “feels” like a catalogue. Logically organized, it is simple to navigate making it easy for gardeners to choose the best plants to



ensure colour throughout the seasons. The large photos printed on high quality, glossy paper makes that selection all the more enjoyable.

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Canadian GARDENING

PLANNING A BALCONY GARDEN

No yard? No problem. Apartment and condo dwellers needn’t miss out on the pleasure of growing their own flowers, fruits and veggies. Just about anything that can be grown in a traditional yard can thrive as part of a balcony garden.

Rules and regulations

Before starting, check with building management for legal, safety, and especially weight considerations. Lightweight alternatives to traditional materials, such as potting mix and containers, will likely be necessary.

Make a plan

Learn about growing conditions like temperature, hours of sunlight, and growing your zone. “Once you understand the growing environment on your balcony it’s easier to design your garden and select the right plants,” says Kim Spink of balconygardener.ca. “Get inspired and try different combinations for your growing conditions.”

If you don’t get things exactly right the first year you garden, one of the advantages of balcony gardens is that they are easy to change from year to year, making experimentation a breeze.

What to grow

Your balcony’s conditions will determine the best vegetation for your garden, but fruits and veggies, like lettuce, strawberries, herbs and tomatoes,

are great for container gardening because they don’t require very much space. Plants that require the structural support of trellises or cages to grow properly (cucumbers, beans and other vine plants) can make use of the fixtures and beams of a balcony.

What not to grow

“Don’t grow plants that are not suited to your growing conditions,” cautions Spink. “You’ll be disappointed.” When starting out “don’t assume that any of your plants will winter-over on a balcony.” Stick with annuals. Do your research and be honest about how much time and effort you’re willing to put into it. “Your growing conditions, commitment to watering/fertilizing, and your budget are the three biggest factors that help you decide what not to grow.”

Design

The same design principles apply on a balcony as they do in a yard.

- Try vertical gardening. Hanging baskets and trellises can be used to maximize space.
- If your building allows it, shelves, hooks, brackets and wall-mounted urns are great balcony space savers.
- Consider incorporating a seating and/or entertaining area.
- Leave breathing room for people and furniture and don’t overcrowd the space.

Continues on page 2

ABOUT OUR MAGAZINE

Gardeners love—and need—solid information and real inspiration to make their gardens great. We work hard to provide that and more for the readers of our magazine and the visitors to our website. In fact, our site goes one better, connecting you with other gardeners and garden-related sites so you can further expand your horizons of knowledge.

Think of CanadianGardening.com as a perfect companion to the magazine and an essential gardening tool—right up there with your trusty spade and pruners. Want to know if other gardens in your province are troubled by chinch bugs and blackspot? Log on and compare notes, pose questions or just chat with your fellow gardeners in *Garden Talk*. Want a list of shade-loving perennials that are hardy to Zone 3? Peruse our extensive archives. Enjoy your visit, and come back often.



Continued from page 1

Caring for balcony gardens

Balcony gardens face certain challenges, one of which is wind. Spink warns that wind can damage plants, knock over containers and dry out soil. Container gardening requires a lot of watering, so remember that a good soaking is much better than an occasional light sprinkling. Gardens in the sky are often subject to pollination problems due to the lack of insect traffic at higher elevations. In some cases hand-pollination may be necessary, so give plants a good shake every day; it should liberate enough pollen to be effective.

To prevent pigeons and magpies from visiting and making a mess, Spink warns to keep the space clean: “Responding quickly to any birds that do try to nest can discourage repeat attempts.” Installing a plastic owl or other bird deterrents might also help prevent your balcony from becoming a birdhouse.

The benefits of balcony gardening

Balcony gardens are quick and easy to maintain. “I can water, weed and fertilize my balcony garden each week in about 15 minutes,” says Spink. There’s also the benefit of being able to set it up quickly in the spring, and tear it down just as quickly in the fall. They’re also easy to change around. “Each year I arrange my containers differently and often choose a completely different collection of plants.”

Not having a yard is no reason not to enjoy growing your own fruits, vegetables and flowers. Even the smallest balcony can be home to a dazzling garden full of lush plants.

10 TIPS FOR CONTAINER GARDENS

Whether your container is traditional planter or an old boot, these 10 tips will take your compact garden the gem of the neighbourhood. You have a stunning container and gorgeous plants to go in it. You plant it carefully, stand back to gaze at your new masterpiece and you’re . . . well, underwhelmed. Nothing’s really wrong, but it doesn’t say “Wow!”

Here are 10 design tips and tricks to help take your planters from merely pretty to pretty fantastic.

- 1

Mulch matters

Pots with a single upright plant—say, a rosemary topiary or a large hosta—leave a great deal of boring soil revealed. A layer of attractive mulch, such as washed river stones, terra-cotta pebbles, glass marbles or sphagnum moss, adds a finishing touch and cuts down on water evaporation. (Remember to keep mulches away from plant stems.)
- 2

Get a lift

To add extra height, place a plastic rose collar (used to protect hybrid teas over winter) in the centre of a large container already filled with soil. Fill the centre of the collar with additional soil. Now you have two tiers to plant in. If the collar is visible after planting is complete, camouflage the plastic using a few clumps of moist sphagnum moss.
- 3

Show no soil

Plant closely, fully and generously so your containers look gorgeous from the get-go. Gently squeeze root balls into thin, narrow shapes to make room for more plants. Don’t worry about the tight quarters: careful watering, quality soil, regular feeding and deadheading will keep your display in top shape.
- 4

More foliage, please

Garden designers always sing the praises of contrasting shapes, textures and shades of green found in foliage plants. In containers, use at least one-third foliage plants to set off flowering plants to best advantage.

- 5

Set the stage

When grouping different containers, raise a few at the back by placing them on bricks or upside down pots. Not only does this add height to your scene, it improves air circulation, too.

Less is more

The fancier, more ornate the container, the simpler the plant palette should be—a grouping of one type in a container can look sophisticated and dramatic. Even simpler: place a massive unplanted container—perhaps glazed Provençal blue or maroon—in a bed of groundcover under a shade tree to inject a punch of colour. Or centre an intricate obelisk (with no vines on it) in a container of low-growing plants to serve as a piece of garden sculpture.
- 6
- 7

Be bold

The farther away your container is from viewers, the bigger and bolder the flower and leaf forms should be. A mass of dainty bacopa and Swan River daisies in a pot next to your front door is a fuzzy blur when seen from the front sidewalk.
- 8

Cue the understudies

For key containers, keep a few duplicate plants growing in pots elsewhere in the garden. Then, if one or two underperform or meet an untimely end, you can replace them with something identical. (Because you know if you go back to the nursery for a replacement, there will be none left!)
- 9

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- 10

Trailers to the back

For a softer, more natural look, plant some trailing plants midway back instead of all along the edge. Let a few stems meander around the bases of upright plants before spilling over the edge.

Dill

This feathery, fern-like herb is actually a hardy annual and acts as a biannual in some climates.

Dill is tall, so plant it behind shorter herbs. It thrives in sun, in rich, loose soil and can be picked at any time — just pinch out the leaves. While the leaves are most flavourful before the flowerheads go to seed, the seeds themselves are coveted for pickling. If you want to use the leaves, dead-head throughout the summer. If you want the seeds, allow the plant to flower and set seeds; leave these until they’ve dried out and turned brown.

Vegetable soups, green salads, chicken and fish pair perfectly with dill’s bright, lemony undertones.

Rosemary

This tender perennial thrives in the heat of a Canadian summer, but should head indoors to a sunny window come autumn. Because rosemary needs good drainage, a terra cotta pot is ideal. Unlike most herbs, rosemary likes to dry out between waterings. To encourage growth, snip the ends often.

This astringent herb is perfect for roasted potatoes, lamb or in a mix of herbs with grilled chicken.

Mint

Versatile but invasive, give mint its own pot. Mint will have you tearing your hair out along with its roots if you decide to plant it directly into your garden.

Whether you opt for mild spearmint or stronger peppermint, full sun and moist soil are all that’s required. This low-maintenance plant grows quickly and can be picked at any time. Just pinch off as many leaves as you need.

Fresh leaves make a refreshing tea and jazz up all kinds of warm weather drinks — from mint juleps to lemonade. Mint also lends authenticity to Middle Eastern dishes like tabouli.

GROW YOUR OWN HERB GARDEN

Tantalize your taste buds with fresh herbs

You don’t need a garden plot to keep yourself supplied with fresh herbs all summer long. A sunny location, some soil, pots and a bit of care can turn a balcony, staircase, deck, patio or window into a private produce department. While mint and rosemary are best grown in individual containers,

you can pack a smorgasbord of various herbs into a window box.

Whether you’re new to gardening or a seasoned pro, these tasty, but easy-to-grow, flavour-filled herbs will have you hooked on fresh.

Basil

This tender annual can’t tolerate cold, so plant only after the threat of frost is over. Place in full sun in rich, moist soil. Encourage new, bushy growth by pinching back the plant to a pair of branching stems. Because basil is most flavorful before the flowers bloom, pinch them out before they bloom and plant a succession to ensure an ongoing harvest. Pick the leaves immediately before using.

Basil has a hint of licorice and is a classic choice with tomatoes and in Mediterranean dishes. Sweet basil is the most common, while the less sweet, purple-leaved variety adds colour to your favourite dishes. If you have room, try planting lemon, cinnamon or clove basil, which smell like their names.

Dried basil has very little flavour, so use fresh or make pesto, then freeze.