



# Over the Garden Gate

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## President's Corner

### My Very Own Greenhouse

Have you ever wanted a greenhouse? You could start your own seeds, over-winter those expensive tropicals from last summer, and enjoy gardening in the winter a little more.



Last December, my husband called to me from the computer, asking "Do you want to see what you are getting for Christmas?" He showed me a picture of a greenhouse that comes as a kit. I, in turn, called up pictures of greenhouses made of old, salvaged windows. We decided on the latter choice and that

is where this project began.

Like with any project, it is a good idea to know how much money you are willing to spend, generally how large it will be, what style you prefer, and where you are going to put it.

We first had to pick a style. Neither of us wanted the hodgepodge look of different sizes and shapes of windows in a crazy quilt pattern. We wanted some symmetry.



An internet search showed us many options for building shapes, window arrangement, and other materials to use. The design was also dependent on the

by Patti Lewis

types of old windows we could find.

Craigslist proved to have a plethora of inexpensive, old windows being sold for crafts and greenhouses like ours.



Wooden halves of double-hung windows hung in two rows on each side appeared to be the best layout, with smaller windows used in the gables on each end. Then, while looking at the collection of windows from the seller, we noticed a half-round window

### Write for Us!

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Email Rick at [rsfreeland@charter.net](mailto:rsfreeland@charter.net) for details.

## Inside This Issue:

President's Corner	1
Go Native...Or Not!	2
Conquering Ga. Clay	3
Sun Dancers	4
Green Side Up	5

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## My Very Own Greenhouse (cont.)

and some sidelights and incorporated them into the design.

When we got everything home, we staked out the greenhouse walls and laid out the windows on the ground. After the rough layout, my husband drew up the plan on our CAD program but it can be drawn up on paper just as well. You must have accurate, precise measurements!

Large, permanent structures may require concrete footings or a foundation, depending on the soil. We elected not to pour a foundation for this smaller building.

After the ground was precisely leveled,

the framing began. Pressure treated 4x4 posts make the corners and frame the door openings. Pressure treated 2x2 studs work well for framing the structure between the windows.



Typically, the windows themselves will not hold the weight of the roof so some type of framing structure will have to be incorporated into the design.

Because we wanted the upper windows to open for ventilation, hinges were used to hang them. They have a shoe molding frame on the inside to keep them from swinging in too far and latches to keep them shut.

The fixed windows were carefully installed on the bottom row. They have been caulked. Doors were fashioned from windows. The front gable holds the half-round window and other windows are in the back gable. Barn board was used to skirt the greenhouse and form the gables.

The roof is made of clear, corrugated, polycarbonate panels. The exterior and interior have been painted to protect the wood.



Consult your local government for permits and building codes and your HOA, if necessary, for covenants.

Materials = \$1000; Free labor = PRICELESS! Thank you to my husband and sons!

## Go Native... Or Not!

by Rick Freeland

True or false: We should use native plants every chance we get.

Well...it depends. Native plants DO have their place. Just not everywhere.

Specifically, many natives have a stressful time adjusting to certain urban environments, particularly parking lots and street conditions.

These sites usually harbor "bad dirt"—a hodgepodge of infertile topsoils and subsoils suffering from poor drainage and inadequate aeration. Construction activities

have likely compacted the soil, which may tip the scale towards alkaline from lime leaching from all that concrete. Urban runoff makes water scarce, especially during the summer. And urban heat load is another problem, as is air pollution.

Many of our native trees and shrubs play best in acid soils with adequate available moisture. Placed in a significantly different urban environment, these natives can easily become victims of

insect invasions, bacteria and fungi.

The best sites for many of our natives are those with little growth restrictions coupled with acidic, well-drained soils and plenty of available moisture.

Whether you're using natives, naturalized or ornamentals, consider the following plant types for urban sites:

\* Species tolerant of poorly drained, alkaline and clay soils.

\* Species adapted to hot, dry climates

and that also tolerate cool, wet winters.

\* For street tree situations, where there's limited space for roots to establish, consider planting smaller trees and shrubs, and protect the soil with mulch.

For further information on using Georgia natives in the landscape, visit *The Redbud Project*.

Source: Article by Prof. Linda Chalker-Scott, "The Myth of Native Plant Superiority".

Many gardeners find our local red clay soils challenging, if not frustrating, to work with. It is gooey when wet, hard as concrete when dry and often possesses a consistency inhospitable to the plants we are trying to cultivate. If faced with clay soil (please don't call it dirt), you have some choices for improving fertility, promoting permeability and enhancing its texture.



Have patience, because achieving this objective can take several years. It entails mixing compost, manure, bark mulch and other organic matter into the soil. Incorporating aggregates such as paver setting bed aggregate, lava sand and expanded shale products like PeraTill, or Mr. Natural CLM can further improve texture

and increase permeability.

Although expensive, growing conditions can be greatly improved by excavating six to eight inches of clay and replacing it with topsoil, available in bags and in bulk. There, however, is a problem, as there are no standards governing top soil quality (virtually anything resembling soil can be labeled topsoil). Ideally topsoil should contain 45% mineral, 5% organic matter and 50% pore space.

It's best to inspect top soil before you purchase. Virtually any topsoil can be enhanced by tilling or digging in manure or compost.

Planting in *raised beds* presents another method of creating conditions more conducive to plant growth, including improved drainage. Raised bed borders can be made from several materials such as pressure treated wood planks, logs, rocks and concrete blocks. Uniformly distributed organic matter, including compost, bark mulch, and

manure, is tilled into the top two inches of clay, thus completing raised bed preparation.

Creating "Lasagna Beds" entails the least physical effort if you want to avoid clay soil. The perimeter of these beds can be defined with a border or not. Beginning with a layer of cardboard, multiple thick layers of leaves, grass clippings, hay manure and compost are formed to a height of approximately two feet. Beds are kept moist and allowed to decompose for from four to six months, at which time they are ready for planting.

If you implement any procedure involving the addition of organic matter, remember its nitrogen hastens its breakdown. An efficient way in which to increase nitrogen is by the use of a high nitrogen fertilizer such as ammonium nitrate (34-0-0). Before planting, it is important to obtain a soil test which will inform you how to correct any soil deficiencies.

In beds of existing ornamentals, the pres-

ence of plants and their roots often makes it difficult to incorporate soil amendments without causing damage. In such instances, during each fall, spread a one inch deep layer of compost or composted manure and then cover the bed with a layer of mulch.



The following spring, fertilize with a slow release fertilizer and add worm castings. Earth worms and insects such as dung beetles will do the work of incorporating organic matter into your clay.

## What the Heck?

### Hypanthium

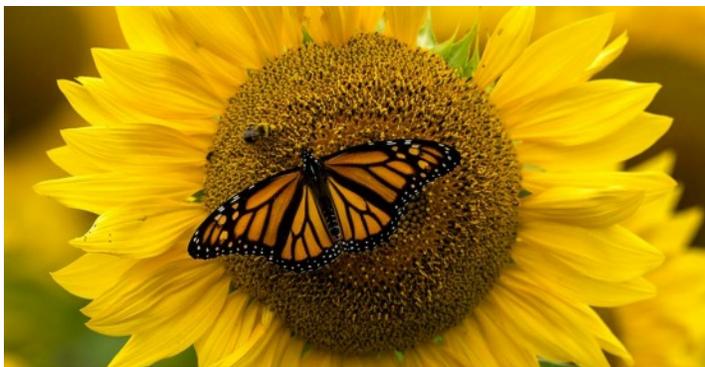
A fruit-like structure, such as a rose hip which carries the true fruits on its upper or inner surface. Literally beneath the flower.

**T**hey're everywhere! On the wallpaper, on the dishes, on the sheets and towels, on notebooks, on greeting cards, on necklaces and earrings...but the best place for them is in the garden.

Why? Because then they can be cut and placed in a big mason jar on the table! Nothing like a big bold display of Sunflowers to say 'Smile, summer is here'!

The cultivated **Sunflower** (*Helianthus annuus*) is one of the 67 species in the genus *Helianthus*. All are native to the Americas and most are found in the USA. Many are indigenous to the Rocky Mountains—one more reason to love Colorado! A few species are found in Peru where this flower was much revered by the Aztecs; in their temples of the Sun, the priestesses were crowned with Sunflowers, and carried them in their hands.

The Sunflower is an annual that is easily grown from seed. Full sun is best. The plant has a rough, hairy stem 3-12 ft. tall, coarse-toothed broad leaves and circular heads. The flowers can be 3-6 inches wide in the wild and often a foot or more in cultivation. The flowerheads are composed of many small



tubular flowers arranged compactly on a flattish disk; those in the outer row have long strap-shaped corollas, forming the rays of the composite flower.

A huge field of Sunflowers presents a glorious view, but that huge field of Sunflowers also has considerable economic value for the grower. Every part of the plant may be uti-

lized for some economic purpose. The leaves form food for cattle. The stems contain a fiber which may be used in making paper. Sunflower seeds are both eaten whole and pressed to produce sunflower oil. The seeds are tasty and rich in fibers and polyunsaturated fatty acids (about 66 % linoleic acid) and low in saturated acids.

Sunflower oil is said to be closer to olive oil than any other vegetable oil known. Nowadays, sunflower oil is one of the most popular oils in the world.

High protein, low carbohydrate diets are here to stay, so it is even more important than ever to make sure they are full of naturally healthy foods such as sunflower seeds. Sunflower seeds are the

best whole-food source of Vitamin E. They provide an ideal heart-healthy profile, are high in protein, and naturally low in carbohydrate. The seed is eaten as a snack by cracking the shell with one's teeth, discarding the hull and eating the delicious morsel within. 'Chew and spit' is a great American pastime, especially at baseball games and other outdoor events. (Sound familiar?)

Following the sun? Young sunflower plants do turn to follow the sun as a result of different sides of the stem elongating at different times of day. But mature sunflowers respond differently to the sun. As overall growth slows down, the flowerhead gradually stops moving westward during the day. The east-facing blooms attract five times as many helpful pollinators. That's because the east-facing flowers heat up faster.... And, bees like warm flowers. Sunflowers are SO smart!

## Using Vines in the Landscape

Want a unique workhorse plant to liven up your garden? Consider a vine. Whether evergreen or deciduous, perennial or annual, vines have a lot to offer the gardener looking for something a little different.

What vine to use depends on your ultimate garden goal and the characteristics of your site. The best vines may very well be the woody and perennial species. They're dependable, fixed plants that generally have permanent stems.

Perennials die back, sometimes to the ground, but rejuvenate the next growing season.

But annual vines have their place. Since they're planted from seed every year and grow quickly and profusely, they can add ever-changing variety to your composition.

### Designing with Vines

Select your vines for specific uses based on the fundamental design attributes of line, form, texture and color.

You might choose vines known for their attractive, dense foliage; showy, fragrant flowers; edible fruits; vibrant fall color; winter bark interest; or a combination of all these factors.

Climbing Hydrangea is a perfect example of a vine offering all-season interest. Climbing Hydrangea puts on a show in summer with clusters of white, fragrant flowers. Its shiny green foliage looks good during the growing season. In fall, leaves turn a burnished yellow before drifting to the ground. Winter reveals its cinnamon-colored peeling bark in all its glory.

Whatever their attributes, vines are usually planted as space-savers, able to extend their best features into the vertical plane. Vines just want to be above it all.

In his book **Professional Planting Design** (2007, John Wiley & Sons), landscape architect Scott Scarfone recommends using vines to establish vertical elements forming points of interest in a garden composed of more neutral horizontal forms. Vertical lines create exclamation points, Scarfone explains, and are more "active" visually.

Hurting for space? Use a vine to introduce that bit of vertical greenery in a tight spot. Vines like to grow high, and can form quite a statement, but their trunk stems only take up a foot or so of horizontal ground width.

In a small garden or a courtyard, vines can serve admirably as vertical focal points. They can develop great height depending on species, while taking up very little width. Where trees may hog too much space, vines trained on a vertical support like a trellis, or planted in a hanging basket on a Shepard's hook, might be perfect for bringing delightful flowers or succulent fruit to eye level.

### Vines as Design Elements

You can use vines in various ways. They're perfect for shading arbors, pergolas, trellises, patios, and garden nooks. Or to cover the sides of solid structures and soften their look.

Provide green covering for fences and walls, creating geometric patterns that soften lines and break the monotony of these type barriers.

Screen undesirable views and create privacy for outdoor living

areas in less space than is needed using trees or shrubs.

Hot indoors? Vines help regulate temperature (especially in places like the desert Southwest). Dense growth on south or west facing walls reflects the sun's rays and decreases interior temperature.

Vines work well as ground-covers on slopes, to control erosion., Or as an alternative to lawn under shade trees.

Frame doors and windows, beautify window boxes and use as container plants on patios or porches.

Create a sense of unity among plantings. Let the vine thread itself through a mass of dissimilar evergreen shrubs.

Flexibility allows easy training to create unique displays and natural structures in the landscape, but consider the ultimate size of your vines, and give a little thought to how they climb. Slow growers are best for walls and structures. Vines with strong, massive stems like Chinese Wisteria should never be grown on a flimsy structure; use at least 4" x 4" posts or a steel frame to support the tremendous weight these vines develop over time.

Some vines have the potential to become invasive. These vines have a tendency to spread to areas where they're not wanted, and may become too large for their spot. Take care in selecting the right vine for its place in the garden, and prepare for periodic maintenance to keep it in line.

All in all, vines are great plants for the garden. When the opportunity arrives to create wonderful vertical elements, or define space in small gardens – think vine!