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The Vine Line

Greetings to all,

I hope all of you are well and enjoying this summer as much as possible. Although life has changed for all of us, the natural world around us is still the same. Try to take solace in the fact the same natural system that has worked since the beginning of time is still in effect for all living things. Try to enjoy the natural beauty around you and if you actively grow a garden, appreciate the fact that you are doing your part to help care for the environment around you.

I hope all of you have taken the time to visit MBG since we have reopened. Right now some of the later blooming Hydrangeas are in full bloom as well as roses, summer annuals and of course many pollinator plants in our Butterfly Garden. If you are coming for the first time in a while, be sure to check out the new plantings in our parking lot as well as our newly renovated Visitor's Center.



In this issue of Vine Line you will hear from our two very capable and talented Summer Interns. They are an important extension of our staff. The Little Garden Club of Memphis generously funds their time at MBG. Elizabeth is caring for our Sensory Garden and will tell you in detail about this themed Garden that has been one of our signature gardens. Bailey Anne who is working in Children's Garden, will share her extensive knowledge about planting containers for the summer months and beyond. I am sure you will enjoy reading what they have to say.

The most important task to do in your garden at this time of year is to keep plants watered as needed. This really is crucial for trees and shrubs that were planted this past spring and have not yet established a deep root system. Also, try your best to pull weeds before they go to seed and finally remove spent blooms on annuals, perennials and roses. This will prevent them from going to seed and encourage more flowers this growing season!

Please stay safe,

Rick

Rick Powell

MBG Director of Horticulture

TLC for Container Gardens



In these days and months of COVID 19 many people have been turning to the plant world for much needed new projects and distractions. Planting up containers with annuals flowers, edible plants or ornamental shrubs can be a fun easy project for any veteran or newby to gardening and is sure to brighten up your days.

Designing and planting container pots is balance of aesthetic appeal, functionality and plant knowledge. Of course you don't want to plant sun-loving petunia and shade-loving impatiens in the same container together, but there is an endless variety of plant combinations to be made with part-sun and part-shade preferring plants and everything in between.

It doesn't matter what you want to plant in the planter pot/container as long as it is planted correctly, tended to properly and watered appropriately. So when you are planting in containers for outdoors keep these main tips in mind for the best success.

- **ALWAYS have drainage:** use containers with drainage holes. If your container doesn't have drainage holes, drill your own holes or consider using a different container. The holes should be proportional to the size of the container. A 24" container will need larger holes than say a 10" diameter pot. The purpose of the drainage holes is to allow extra water to drain through your soil and out of the base of the container. These holes also allow for adequate air to be available to the root system of the plants in the container. While yes there are some plants that can tolerate stagnant water, many can not and will suffer without well draining soil. A layer of river rock or gravel can be put at the bottom of a container to enable more drainage if needed and can also help prevent drainage holes from being clogged with soil.
- **REFRESH/AMEND YOUR SOIL.** When replanting year to year in the same containers use new potting soil or amend the old soil that is in the container. Old potting soil will not provide the same support and nutrients to your plants as new fresh soil will. Just like ground soil, potting soil will have its nutrients used up and/or leached out of it over time. You can amend your soil with compost (no more than 1/3 compost to potting soil) or you can add Espoma Plant-tone organic plant food. Without added nutrients your plants will be drab, not fab.
- **PRUNE/TRIM/CLEAN.** When tending to your container plants there are a few things to keep in mind. For annual flowers, "deadheading" old spent blooms can encourage the plant to put on new buds and rebloom. Removing any yellow or brown foliage is a good idea, not only for appearances but often times old foliage can harbor non beneficial insects and pests. Also removing old foliage can make room for new foliage growth. Pruning back and trimming your plants can help maintain a fuller and healthier plant. After all when plants are in containers, their roots are quite literally contained. So for larger plants that may want to out grow their containers, you can do one of two things... repot them into a larger container

or prune back the foliage (no more than 1/3 of foliage) to balance with the root volume. Make sure if you are dealing with a perennial or evergreen flowering plant (example, azalea or camellia) that you prune at the appropriate time of year as to not diminish next years blooms.

- **WATER AS NEEDED.** So this is the biggy, and where most people trip up with container planting. The water needs for container plants vary for many different reasons. The water preference of the individual plants (i.e succulent, drought tolerant, water loving) and the amount of exposure to sun and wind (usually the more sun wind the more water it will need).

The two key things to remember when watering A.) When you do water a container it's best to FULLY saturate the soil. With containers this usually means you will see the water coming out the bottom drainage holes, that's good, that is what they are there for, to let out excess water drain out. B.) Water again ONLY when the soil has dried down and the plants are ready for another drink. Feel the soil, ideally poke your finger deep into the dirt to detect moisture levels. Look at the plants foliage, see if it shows wilt or a slight sag.

The amount and frequency of watering required for outdoor containers will vary day to day, week to week, month to month. Temperatures, plant growth and size, exposure to sun and wind, humidity in the air are some of the many things that impact the water requirements for any given planter outdoors.



With this said it's often too easy to assume that a container should need the same amount of water all the time, because it's the same size and has the same plants in it, but in the fall and winter this could be disastrous for the plants. Over watering can cause root rot, mildew and mold on the foliage and overall deterioration of the plants health. In the summer in full sun and heat a container may very well need to be fully watered twice a day.

Whenever watering container plants just try to pay attention to the individual plants and the soil and water accordingly, if you over water one day...let it dry down before watering again. If you forget to water and the plant wilts, make sure to fully saturate the soil before walking away again.

All in all container planting is one of the most variable and enjoyable gardening activities that everyone can do. It's accessible for all, from the most avid of gardeners to the newbies looking for a new project in our times of isolation and social distancing. For postage stamp size back patios to sprawling yards and hardscapes. As long as you set up your container planter correctly and are attentive to the plants themselves, your bound to have something to be proud of and make you smile.

By Bailey Ann Harper, MBG Intern

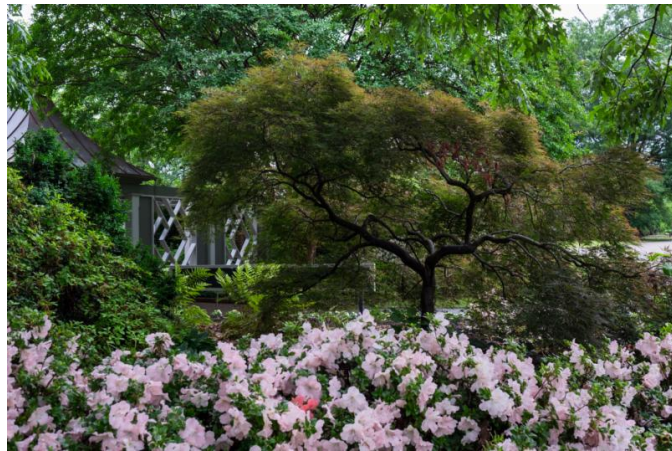
Appealing to all five senses in the

Little Garden Club Sensory Garden



Whether you are a seasoned veteran in the world of horticulture or a newcomer, most people agree that the everyday world of maintaining a garden can be tedious and often monotonous. The endless struggle of weeding and pruning can feel overwhelming and stressful. However, these monotonous tasks of weeding, watering, planting, and pruning can become therapeutic and calming if you let them. These repetitive tasks are often used as a form of therapy called horticultural therapy and its successful results have been documented since the 19th century. The popularity of horticultural therapy surged in the 1940s and 1950s when it became widely used as a therapy for war veterans. While we do not have a therapeutic garden, we do have our Sensory Garden, which was made with the intention of being more widely accessible for those who are confined to a wheelchair and more enjoyable to those who have disabilities such as hearing loss or loss of any sense by appealing to all five senses.

One of the obvious senses experienced in a garden is sight. In the Sensory Garden, we have salvia, verbenas, phlox, and gorgeous hydrangeas that are bursting with color. Additionally, there are two metal sculptures that loom over the beds of caladium and coleus. However, if you do not have good vision, don't worry! Our sense of smell is easy to stimulate in a garden. Most flowers have a lovely, although sometimes elusive scent--unless you stick your nose directly into the flower. In the Sensory Garden, this is not the case. The lavender and rosemary planted along the raised bed in the back of the garden both have very strong smells. Lavender is most commonly used in essential oils and rosemary is often used as a spice.



Sound and touch strangely go hand in hand in the Sensory Garden. The large two-level fountain near the entrance to the garden provides a constant stream of running water which is an extremely relaxing sound that can be heard anywhere in the small garden. The soothing sound is often accompanied by the laughing of children walking around the edge of the fountain and occasionally dipping their hands in the water to splash their friends. I have noticed that many of these kids love testing to see if their favorite toy will float in the water or

not, which often ends with their parents asking to borrow a rake or shovel to fish their child's toy out of the bottom of the fountain. There is also a small wind chime tree in the shaded portion of the garden that--true to its name--chimes in the wind and while it requires a short climb, many children have marched up the inclined bed to play with its limbs and test out which ones are the loudest. Taste is the hardest sense to account for, especially in a garden that allows children to roam freely. The last thing any parent wants is for their child to eat poisonous berries found near their house or park because they thought it was the same plant that they saw at the botanical gardens. This is why in the Sensory Garden, we have rosemary which is not eaten plain. Because it is a common spice, it can be used to season soups, casseroles, stews, and any other dish of your choice. Wild blueberries can also be found in the shade garden. Most children love eating blueberries and know that they are safe to eat and almost nothing found in nature resembles its bright blue color.

I hope you come and visit this gorgeous garden!

By Elizabeth Podraza, MBG Intern

Be sure to follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) to see what's blooming at the Garden.

Something you want to see or learn more about? Email our Horticulture Director rick.pudwell@memphisbotanicgarden.com.

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