

Tips for New Gardeners

Whether you have just purchased a home or have decided to get more involved in your garden, here are some tips about gardening that will make it easier for you.

If your home is new, it is recommended that you live with your landscape for one year before making any major changes – experience what blooms and when, what you love, what you cannot stand. During the year, look around at your neighbor's homes and notice what grows well in similar conditions, read magazines, and clip pictures. If you like something, stop and ask what it is or take a photo of it and bring it into Johnson's for identification. Then you will have some idea of where to start.

- * You need the right type of gardening gear to achieve optimum results. Initially, invest in a shovel, hoe, rake, trowel, gloves, and pruning shears. As you become more experienced, you may select other items.
- * Always plant the right plant in the right place. Trying shade plants in the sun or vice versa will not be a happy experience.
- * Always keep in mind the mature size of the plant/shrub/tree. The biggest mistake that people make is planting things too close together. Plants need room to breathe and good air circulation.
- * Feed your soil, not the plant. The secret to a great garden is great soil. Try to add large amounts of organic materials like Bumper Crop, LeafGro, grass clippings, or homemade compost to your soil.
- * Plants die, but don't take it personally. Sometimes plants die for no apparent reason. Don't obsess over it. Consider it an opportunity to try another plant.
- * Start small. Try a 4 x 8 foot bed. A new gardener has to build skill and make time for gardening. The more time you spend planning your garden, the greater the odds you will take the time to find out where you want things placed.
- * Avoid over-watering. Most new gardeners think that the more water the better when usually just the opposite is true. Check the soil before watering.
- * Don't over-fertilize. More is not always better; often it is worse. Take the time to learn the nutrient needs of your plants and the differences in various kinds of fertilizers.
- * Don't kill all the bugs. A healthy garden will always have a population of insect life both good and bad. The key is balance. Most of the insects in the garden are good guys. They may nibble on the occasional leaf but they earn their keep by eating up the bad guys and providing pollination services. Less than 5% of the various insects are true pests.
- * Plan to weed. Don't let weeds become established in your garden. Pull them out before they go to seed. You can limit the problem by using mulch, but some maintenance is necessary.

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