

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding how plants are named
- » Examining flowering plants
- » Checking out trees, shrubs, and vines
- » Managing your lawn

Chapter **1**

Getting Ready for Gardening

No matter what your main gardening interest — be it growing vegetables, making your yard colorful with flowers, picking out just the right tree, or aspiring to have the most gorgeous roses on the block — chances are that you care most about the plants. Sure, gardening can also involve landscaping and lawn care (see the chapters in Part 3 of this book), or being able to grow your own food (Part 4), or just having a great excuse to play in the dirt (Part 5), but for most people, the plants make everything worthwhile.

Okay, yeah, I know, you already know you need to plan and prepare your soil to get your garden going, but you *really* just want to read about plants right now, right? In that case, the rest of this chapter is devoted to the most basic explanations of the kinds of plants you may encounter in the world of gardening. Later chapters in this book go into much more detail about the various types of plants, trees, bushes, and vines, but here I help you get a sense of how plants are similar and different — the first step in turning a brown thumb green. First, though, I explain a bit about names.

Playing the Name Game

What's in a name? For gardeners, plenty. Gardening is a blend of horticulture and botany, common names and high science, and the names can get a bit confusing. Whether you're looking at plant anatomy or simply want to know what to call a plant, understanding a bit about naming can help you wade through the garden center aisles, ask better questions, and treat your plants right.

Getting used to plant nomenclature

Whenever you're talking about plants, knowing how they're named can help you avoid getting tangled up in the Latin or Greek. Generally, when looking for plants and flowers, you encounter two types of names — botanical and common. Read on for some info on how the naming system works, and then *carpe diem* — *pluck the day!*



TECHNICAL
STUFF

There is a reason why Latin and Greek are the languages used in naming plants. Latin and Greek have always been the language of scholarship, for scientists worldwide. They're unchanging, unlike the modern, daily-use language.

Botanical names

The *botanical name* is the proper or scientific name of a plant. It consists of two parts and is called a *binomial* (*bi equals two, nomial equals name*):

- » **The species name:** The species name is kind of like your own first name (except it comes last in a plant's botanical name).
- » **The genus name:** The genus name is similar to your family name (except in botanical names, it comes first).

For example, in the plant name *Hosta undulata*, *Hosta* is the genus name, and *undulata* is the species name. *Hosta* describes an entire genus of popular, mostly shade-loving plants named hostas, and *undulata* describes the type of hosta it is — a hosta with an undulating leaf shape.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The singular and plural for the word *species* is *species*.

Sometimes the botanical name has a third name, right after the species name, known as the botanical variety. A botanical *variety* is a member of the same plant species but looks different enough to warrant its own name, such as *Rosa gallica* var. *officinalis*.

Still another botanical name that sometimes comes up is the *cultivar*, short for cultivated variety. Cultivars are usually named by the people who developed or discovered them, and they're often maintained through asexual or vegetative propagation for example by cuttings, seed propagation, or the most-modern method of raising large numbers of identical plants in test tubes, called *tissue culture*. In other words, they're cultivated (humans grow, improve, and develop them). An example is *Lychnis coronaria* 'Angel's Blush.' You can use or modify some of these techniques to make more plants yourself. For more details about how to, see Chapter 10.



REMEMBER

A *hybrid* plant is the result of the cross-pollination between two genetically different plants, usually of the same species but different varieties. This combination can happen with human intervention, when the object is to make a new or improved plant or it can occur naturally through bee pollination between two different plants.

Botanical names are more common with some types of plants than others. For instance, you frequently run into them with herbaceous plants, trees, and shrubs but much less so with roses, annuals, and vegetables. You can find botanical names on the labels and in many garden references.

Even though botanical names can be a bit intimidating and sometimes a pain to remember, they're much more definitive than common names. They're recognized internationally so anywhere you are in the world, fellow plant lovers will know what plant you're talking about.

Common names

Common names are what you're most likely to encounter when shopping for plants to put in your garden, and they're what you mostly encounter in this book. You can find these names prominently displayed on seed packets or on seedling trays of plants that are for sale. They're kind of like botanical nicknames that gardeners use to describe a certain type of plant without going into a great amount of detail. For example, the *Hosta undulata* fits into the genus *Hosta*, so most gardeners merely refer to these plants under the common name of hostas. And you may know that *Hemerocallis* is actually the genus name for the common daylily, but chances are that most gardeners you encounter just call them daylilies.

SHARING NAMES WITH DISTANT RELATIVES

If you want to be absolutely sure of the plant you're buying, then remember that the botanical or scientific name, including the cultivar name, is the most exact one. Some common names, like *common basil*, are very specific. All common basil has the same genus and species, *Ocimum basilicum*. However, a common name like daisy is so general that it may not be very helpful. This term can apply to plants very faintly related found in various genera (genuses). For instance, a "daisy" can be an African daisy (*Arctotis* or *Gerbera*), Dahlberg daisy (*Dyssodia tenuiloba*), English daisy (*Bellis perennis*), painted daisy (*Chrysanthemum coccineum*), Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum superbum*), and many others. If you're shopping by common names, read labels to make sure this particular kind of plant can grow for you.

The biggest problem with common names is that the same plant can have many different common names depending on what part of the United States or the world you live in.

Anatomy 101: Naming plant parts

Beyond recognizing the names of plants, knowing the various parts of plants is also useful. Figure 1-1 shows a nice, healthy perennial plant with the basic parts displayed. Botanists use many more descriptive and detailed names for plant parts, but you have enough to remember without getting further confused! You probably already know most of the common ones, but keep these parts in mind, because you need to know them to understand some of the things I discuss in the rest of this book and to speak the language with fellow gardeners. In the figure, the *taproot* (not all plants have this) is the main root of the plant; the *stolon*, or *runner*, is a horizontal stem that spreads underground, sending up more plants as it goes; many groundcovers (pachysandra, ivy, ice plant) operate this way, as anyone who has tried to tug up a patch well knows!



REMEMBER

Propagate is a term commonly used in horticulture to describe the process of reproducing or multiplying plants. I discuss it more detail in Chapter 10.

When you know the parts of plants and the difference between all the plant names you run into, you may be ready to get the lowdown on the types of plants out there!

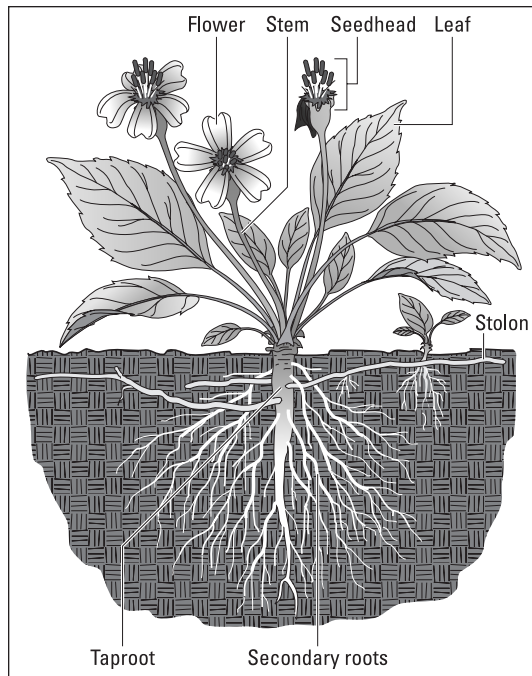


FIGURE 1-1:
The basic parts of
a perennial plant,
above and below
ground.

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Beautifying with Flowers (and Foliage)

Flowers are often the first thing that comes to mind when people think of gardening and the first thing people plan to grow when they want to beautify their surroundings. Flowers are marvelous because they come in a vast array of sizes, colors, and shapes (see Figure 1-2), and no matter where you live, at least one kind of flowering plant can grow there. Even the volcanic crater of Haleakala, on the island of Maui, is home to a flowering plant: the rare silver sword.

Flowers are more than merely the beautiful display they put on, however. If you know the different types of flowers out there, you can take full advantage of displaying them in your own garden. Read on for info on annuals and perennials, as well as a bit on bulbs and roses.

Amazing annuals

You may already know what annuals are without realizing that you know! These beauties are the flowers, arrayed in flats and pots, for sale every spring down at the garden center — everything from geraniums to impatiens to marigolds. You bring them home and plunk 'em in the ground, and they get right to work,

delivering pretty much continuous color all summer long. When fall comes, they start to slow down (some may even go to seed); cold weather eventually causes them to wither and die. Game over. (That is, unless you live in a frost-free climate; in this case, your “annuals” may become perennials. See the section, “Perennial plants,” later in this chapter for more information.)

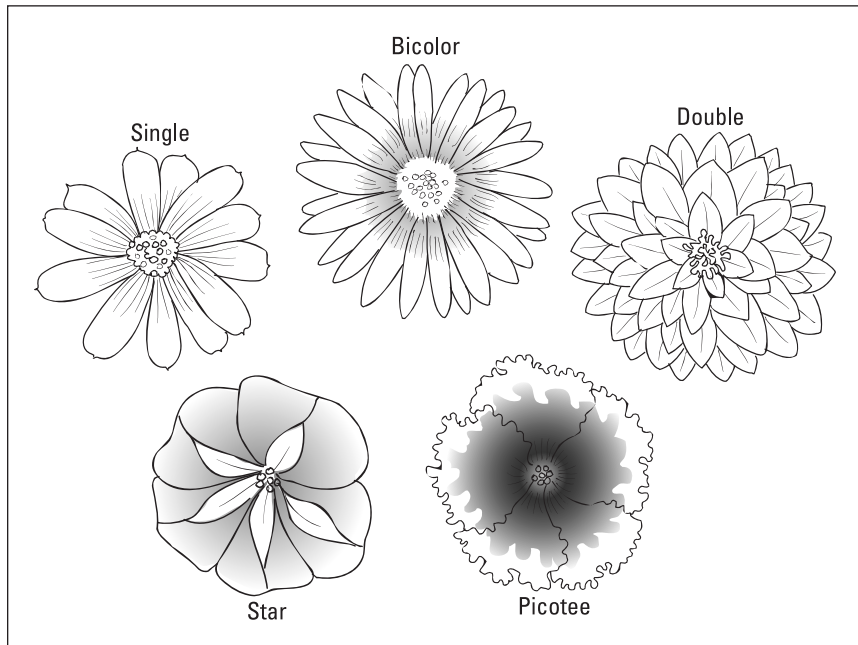


FIGURE 1-2: Flowers come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes.

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For the brief time annuals are growing and pumping out flowers, you get a lot of bang for your buck. A great deal of selection and breeding refinements over the years have made these plants totally reliable. They’re full of exuberant energy and hard to kill. Indeed, some of them keep blooming their cheery heads off even when you neglect them. They provide reliable garden color even as perennials cycle in and out of bloom.

Some gardeners have been known to sneer at good old annuals. They’re boring. They’re *too* perky. They’re “plastic plants.” These folks may or may not have a point, but hey, annuals are hard to beat if you want a colorful garden.

In the end, the main drawback of annuals is economic. You have to buy new ones every spring. If you’re planting a wide area, running out to buy more year in and year out can get expensive. Time may also be an issue for you — you may grow sick and tired of getting down on your hands and knees and replanting. (If you’re getting to that point, consider a longer-term investment, planting perennials.)

You can use annuals

- » To fill an entire flowerbed (this popular use is why some places call annuals *bedding plants*)
- » To add to container displays — in pots, window boxes, patio planter boxes, and more
- » To fill a hanging basket
- » To edge a walkway
- » To insert reliable color in a perennial bed
- » To decorate a vegetable and herb garden
- » To cover over or at least distract from a fading spring bulb display
- » To add summer color to your flower beds when the perennials are done blooming
- » To fill in places where perennial plants haven't filled in yet — the added advantage of covering ground so opportunistic weeds can't move in

If the info you want on annuals isn't in the upcoming sections, you can get an in-depth look in Chapter 6.

Caring for and feeding annuals

Luckily, taking proper care of annuals is not rocket science. For the most part, annuals are easygoing, because they're bred to be quite tough and durable. Many can withstand some neglect and still be productive — not that I recommend ignoring them!



REMEMBER

Without a doubt, water is an annual's number one need. All that lusty growth and continuous flowering requires fuel. A thirsty plant can't sustain the show for long. Regular, deep soakings are best because they reliably supply water to the roots, which leads to a stress-free life of consistent growth and bud and bloom production. (Note that a drying-out plant favors its roots and, to a lesser extent, its leaves, in a bid for survival, automatically jettisoning its water-hogging buds and petals.) Note that annuals grown in pots, hanging baskets, or window boxes dry out much faster than ones grown in the ground. See Chapter 4 for more info on watering.

You can't deny that regular doses of plant food or fertilizer significantly boost your annuals (make sure you apply it according to directions). For best flowering fertilize every six weeks with a granular or organic fertilizer or add a water-soluble fertilizer to your sprinkling can every week or so. The leaves become

healthier and greener, and you end up with more buds and flowers. Chapter 4 contains information on fertilizer as well.

The rather unromantic term of *deadheading* simply refers to the practice of pinching or cutting off spent flowers. Your annuals look nicer when you do this, of course, but removing the flowers also serves another purpose: It thwarts the plant from the energy-intensive process of producing seeds, and the plant responds by diverting its energy back into making more flowers.

Raising annuals from seed

Of course, you can raise annuals from seed, which is the most economical approach, especially if you want to grow large quantities for a display garden. Some are simpler to grow than others. Annuals with very small seeds like snapdragons and begonias are a bit more of a challenge because you need to start them indoors in a bright windowsill or under fluorescent lights.

Just buy the seed packets in late winter and sow them in flats or pots (particular directions are always on the back of the packets). Raise the seedlings indoors until spring weather comes and the soil warms up and all danger of frost is past; then move the plants outside.

Some annuals are so fast-growing that you can sprinkle their seeds on good soil in late spring, right outside, and they'll quickly sprout and grow. This group includes popular ones like zinnias, marigolds, and nasturtiums. This process may require you to do some thinning at some point, but otherwise, it's dead easy. Again, consult the back of the seed packet for details. One advantage to this tack is that you can grow some more unconventional or rare annuals. It certainly makes for a more interesting garden! Refer to Chapter 10 for more about growing plants from seed.

Beholding a one-time show

The very definition of an *annual* — a plant that goes from seed to flowering to death in one season, completing its entire life cycle in short order — states that annuals are a one-time show. When it's over, it's over. (Except when it's not; if you garden in a mild climate, many annuals merely slow down for the winter but survive. Snapdragons and many salvias are examples.)

If you garden in a cold climate, you can try digging up some favorites or bringing potted annuals inside. Keep them in a nonfreezing place, out of direct sunlight, and let them rest. Cut back all spent growth. Start reviving them with water and plant food when spring returns.

ANNUALS THAT AREN'T REALLY ANNUALS

False annuals are plants with tropical origins, or ones whose parents hail from the tropics, which means that they're actually perennial — more long-lived — somewhere, somewhere warmer, somewhere far away like Costa Rica or Mexico. These pseudo-annuals, sometimes called *tender perennials*, can, at least in theory, be kept going over the winter and live to dress up your garden again next year. Examples of these tropical visitors include the coleus, geranium, impatiens, salvia, snapdragon, and wax begonia.

Meanwhile, *biennials* are plants that only live for two years. They grow their foliage and roots the first year and then flower the following year and then die. The most common examples are Canterbury bells, forget-me-nots, foxgloves, hollyhocks, pansies, stock, and verbascum (mullein). They frequently reseed themselves so some gardeners let them go to seed to ensure future plants. Most garden centers helpfully start these plants for you the season before or in early winter so they're usually sold as annuals and flower the first year that you plant them.

However, if despite your best efforts, your wintered-over annuals don't return to their former glory the following spring, accept their fate, pull them out, and replace them with new ones. Some of the annuals like marigolds, sunflowers, and zinnias reseed or self-sow themselves so they'll sprout and grow plants the following spring when the ground warms. Depending on how aggressively they do this can be a good or bad thing.

Perennial plants

For many gardeners, going from growing annuals to exploring perennials seems to be a natural progression. But remember that you don't have to choose! You can grow both and, indeed, your garden is likely to be the better for the diversity.

So, what, exactly are *perennials*? One gardener jokingly defined a perennial as “A plant that, had it lived, would've bloomed again the next year.” For the most part, they're long-lived herbaceous (non-woody) plants — flowers and herbs, mainly. How long they last depends on the plant and the conditions in your garden. But these plants certainly last longer than annuals.

A typical perennial emerges in the spring, grows and often produces flowers and seeds as the seasons progress from spring to summer to fall, and then slows down or dies back in winter. But the plant doesn't actually die; it just rests. The following spring, your perennial returns in glory to repeat the cycle.

Unlike annuals, you don't have to replant perennials every year. Once should be enough — well, if you choose wisely and take good care of your perennials, you ought to get many good years out of them.

Eventually, though, some perennials run out of steam. Their growth gets crowded and they don't seem to flower as well. At this time, you can dig them out and replace them, or you can divide them (perhaps discarding the tired-out center, or mother plant) and replant well-rooted bits for a fresh new start.

Here are some of the many uses of perennials:

- » Creating a colorful bed or border
- » Filling an *island bed* (an isolated, self-contained garden, like an island in a sea of lawn)
- » Mixing them with annuals to assure summer-long color
- » Edging a walkway, patio, pool area, or deck
- » Interplanting them with roses, annuals, or other ornamental shrubs to provide year-round interest
- » Dressing up an area that was formerly lawn

For the nitty-gritty details on perennials, check out Chapter 7. If you just want the basics, read on.

IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR: GROUNDCOVERS

Low-growing perennial plants may be handy in a flower border (near the front where they won't be blocked from view) or as an edging, but they have another, very practical use: You can plant entire areas with them, and they can form a low-care carpet. Groundcovers are problem-solvers for difficult-to-landscape areas such as shady areas, including under trees where lawn won't grow, or areas where you don't want to or can't easily mow such as slopes/embankments.

Some favorite groundcovers include ajuga, candytuft, creeping phlox, epimedium, hosta, ivy, lamium, lily-of-the-valley, pachysandra, sweet woodruff, verbena, and vinca. For details on groundcovers, turn to Chapter 14.

Caring for and feeding perennials

The water needs of perennials vary. Some are moisture-lovers, others are drought-tolerant, and many are somewhere in the middle. Do your homework when choosing plants, not just on what they prefer but on which ones are suitable to the growing conditions in your yard and climate (otherwise, you'll be jumping through hoops trying to please them). Chapter 2 can help you get a grip on how to plan your garden.

One generalization is possible, though: Nothing makes newly planted perennials feel more welcome than plentiful water does. The perennials have gone from a sheltered and confining life in a pot to the wide world of your garden, and water helps sustain the roots and encourages them to establish themselves and expand into their new home.

Many perennials (like most people) enjoy being fed. They respond by growing more robustly and producing more flowers. You're fine with a general, all-purpose garden fertilizer, applied according to the label directions during the height of the growing season. Don't feed your perennials as fall approaches and growth naturally begins to slow. You don't want them producing a fresh new flush of growth that soon gets nipped by a frost. (For some general info on fertilizing, see Chapter 4.)

I have to admit that fertilizing the majority of perennials isn't mandatory. If you plant them in soil that suits them (and do your homework when choosing the plants), they may do just fine without it. Good, organically rich soil and good growing conditions and regular water can sustain healthy, hearty perennial growth for quite some time. Fertilizing merely supplies a boost in these cases.

Looking at lifespan

The life cycle of a perennial depends on various factors, notably the type of plant and whether it's happy in your garden. But you can certainly expect to get a minimum of two years and a maximum of a decade out of the vast majority of perennials. For best results, of course, take good care of them.



REMEMBER

Most perennials are slow starters. During their first year in your garden, they tend to invest in developing a good root system. Be patient! After that's established, they grow and expand, and the flower show gets better with each passing year. You can hurry things along by fertilizing regularly during the height of the growing season (see Chapter 4 for fertilizing details) and get a head start by planting in the fall (see the next section).

Considering fall planting

If you shop for perennials in late summer and get them in the ground a good six weeks or more before the first frost, those plants will definitely have a head start over their spring-planted counterparts. In fall, the soil is still warm and welcoming, and drenching fall rains can help water in the new kids. Depending on the severity of your winter, cutting back any new growth and mulching when winter is just around the corner may be good ideas.



TIP

Most perennials sold in the late summer or fall have been grown for an entire season so they're generally bigger plants than what you'll find for sale in the spring. Also, they're many times on sale because the grower doesn't want to overwinter them so you get a good deal. For much more on perennials, please turn to Chapter 7.

Bulbs and roses

Bulbs, which store their food underground, are a richly varied group of plants. The best-known ones like tulips and daffodils are spring flowering, but these plants represent only the tip of the iceberg. Many others, like dahlias and lilies, are summer bloomers. What they all have in common is that they're easy to grow and produce plenty of flowers. Just provide them a sunny, well-drained spot, stand back, and let them do their thing. See Chapter 8 for info on bulbs.

Although bulbs are quite popular, roses are America's favorite flowers for many reasons. They epitomize romance and come in an impressive range of flower colors, not to mention their inimitable delicious fragrances. Lucky for us, modern rose breeders have worked their wonders on this plant to produce roses that are not only stunningly beautiful but also tough as nails.

Roses are no longer the wimps that gardeners loved to think about growing but were afraid to try because of the reputation for being a magnet to every known plant disease and insect pest. Today's varieties are also available in a range of plant habits, from upright to bush forms to those that are ground hugging. Chapter 9 can fill you in on growing roses.

Gardening for Your Dining Pleasure

Increasingly for many gardeners, growing food is the real reason for gardening. There really isn't quite anything like the feeling of satisfaction a gardener gets from nurturing and encouraging a tomato plant to put forth the most gorgeous and delicious tomatoes imaginable or harvesting a healthy and tasty fruit from a

tree planted right in the front yard. And if you like to cook, there's nothing quite like working with and eating freshly harvested produce that you know exactly what chemicals have been added or not.

Food-bearing plants come in all shapes, sizes, and types, from annuals and perennials, to trees and bushes, to vines that creep along the ground or climb to impressive heights when given the right support. Chapter 15 gives you the information you need to get started on growing your own vegetables. Chapter 16 is devoted to herbs and how you can grow them to enhance the dishes that come out of your kitchen.

Working with Woody (or Viny) Plants

When planning which plants to grow in your garden, check out native plants. In general, they're easy to grow because they have been long adapted to your area, are frequently drought tolerant, and are usually low maintenance. Check out which plants are native to your area at <http://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/plants>.

Woody plants consist of shrubs, some vines, and trees. This group of plants is probably a more important garden element than annuals and perennials simply because of the space that woody plants take up over the long term. They serve as kind of the bones of your garden. You may have inherited some trees and shrubs when you moved into your present home, or you may be considering replacing what you have or installing some new ones. Whatever you're thinking, choose and act wisely. Allow these bigger plants the elbow room, the deeper prepared soil, and the light they may need.

The reason trees, shrubs, and some vines are called *woody plants* is that the bulk of their stems, and branches, are, well, woody — not herbaceous. This growth doesn't wither or die back in the wintertime, as it does with herbaceous plants. Yes, the leaves, flowers, fruits, berries, and seeds may fade and fall off, but the rest of the plant abides. And with each passing year, the main stem or trunk grows another layer thicker, and the plant may add additional branches or woody stems. No wonder woody plants are considered more-or-less permanent, and certainly substantial, parts of a home landscape.

Shrubs

You may choose flowering or evergreen shrubs. Both kinds are worthwhile in different ways. Just bear in mind that flowering shrubs tend to have a fairly brief period of glory, and then you're left with only foliage, so pick a shrub whose

foliage you like. Good fall color and attractive or exfoliating bark, leaves, and/or berries may also be a factor in your decision. On the other hand, evergreen shrubs, whether broadleaf or needled, are valuable for long-term, consistent green color, sometimes offer attractive flowers, and, in many cases, a denser-growing profile.

Favorite shrubs for home landscapes include

- » **Flowering:** Althea, deciduous azalea, broom, butterfly bush, daphne, deutzia, elderberry, flowering quince, forsythia, fothergilla, hibiscus, hydrangea, itea, lilac, mock orange, ninebark, privet, red buckeye, red twig dogwood, smoke bush, spirea, sweetshrub, sweetspire, various viburnums, weigela, winterberry, and witch hazel
- » **Broadleaf evergreen (with spring flowers and more-or-less evergreen foliage):** Andromeda, aucuba, boxwood, camellia, cotoneaster, evergreen abelia, gardenia, holly, laurel, leucothoe, mahonia, manzanita, mountain laurel, nandina, oleander, rhododendron, and rock rose
- » **Evergreen:** Arborvitae, boxwood, euonymus, some cedars, some false cypresses, hemlock, holly, juniper, laurel, some pines, some spruces, and yew

Take a look at some of the roles shrubs can play:

- » Foundation planting (around the base of your house to add architectural interest, insulation, and security)
- » Boundary and hedge plantings (possibly in addition to, or in lieu of, fencing — thorny ones, including shrubby roses, are popular as living fences)
- » Individual, solo spots of color (specimen plants)
- » Mixed-border citizens for more architectural interest (have a mixture of shrubs, or have a mixture of one type of shrub and roses or perennials or vines or all of these)
- » Backdrops for a flower border
- » Entryway, poolside, deck side, or privacy plantings
- » As food and shelter for songbirds

For much more on shrubs, please turn to Chapter 13.



WARNING

Some shrubs can be extremely invasive and, in fact, are even against the law to plant in some cities or states. Some that you should avoid are Amur honeysuckle, autumn olive, barberries, burning bush, bush honeysuckle, common gorse, buckthorn, and multiflora rose. For a more complete list check out www.invasiveplantatlas.org/shrubs.cfm.

Trees

Trees can raise your property value, improve air quality, prevent erosion, lower your air conditioning costs with welcome shade, and provide a handy support for your hammock. Not too shabby, eh?

For most home gardeners, trees in the landscape are often already present but need care and pruning to look good and remain healthy. Or you may be shopping for one or more ornamental or fruiting trees to add. As with shrubs, your options include deciduous (ones that drop their leaves each fall; they may flower and fruit or have berries or seedpods) and evergreen (with leaves or needles that remain year-round).

Favorite trees for home landscapes include

- » **Flowering and deciduous:** Catalpa, dogwood, dove tree, golden chain tree, horse chestnut, magnolia, redbud, serviceberry, silk tree, snowbell, and stewartia
- » **Shade trees:** Ash, basswood, beech, catalpa, elm, ginkgo, honey locust, Kentucky coffee tree, linden, locust, various maples, various oaks, sourwood, sweet gum, and tupelo
- » **Evergreen:** Arborvitae, cedar, cypress, false cypress, fir, hemlock, juniper, Norfolk Island pine, pine, spruce, and yew
- » **Fruit and nut trees:** Almond, apple, apricot, avocado, cherry, chestnut, citrus, crabapple, fig, filbert (hazelnut), juneberry, loquat, mulberry, nectarine, olive, pawpaw, peach, pear, pecan, plum, quince, and walnut

Roles trees can play involve things like

- » Shade
- » Privacy (including noise reduction)
- » Grandeur and substance in the landscape
- » Food (fruits, berries, and nuts — for you and your family as well as for wildlife)
- » Decorative beauty due to foliage (including fall color!)
- » Shelter and food for birds and other wild creatures



WARNING

Referring to any trees as terrible may be heresy, but some trees can cause real problems like producing huge quantities of seeds that sprout all over where they aren't wanted and messy seed heads or fruit that are a pain to clean up. Some trees produce soft, weak growth that results in limbs breaking and falling on your

house. Some of the undesirables are boxelder (sheds fruit and twigs, plus shelters yucky boxelder bugs), Bradford pear (heavy seeding and splitting branches), ginkgo (stinky fruit), silver maple (splitting branches), sweetgum (nuisance spiny balls), and tree of heaven (weak weedy growth). For checking out other invasive trees refer to www.invasive.org/species/trees.cfm.

For much more information on trees in general, please turn to Chapter 12. For info on fruit and nut trees, check out Chapter 18.

Vines

Annual vines like morning glory, nasturtium, moonflower, and so on aren't woody, but vines — woody or not — can be a substantial presence in your landscape. Vines like to grow upward, though some need assistance in terms of occasional judicious pruning/trimming, guidance, and/or support.

Some vines are valued mainly for their lush foliage. Others flower and fruit, with attractive seedheads or berries by fall — all factors that naturally add to their appeal and affect placement and maintenance. Choose vines based on whether and when you want these extra, color-contributing features. Also, when purchasing, be sure to inquire about predicted mature size.

Some of my favorite vines for home landscapes that are both attractive and have bird and wildlife appeal are

- »» Bougainvillea
- »» Clematis
- »» Climbing hydrangea
- »» Climbing roses
- »» Creeping fig
- »» Dutchman's pipe
- »» Grape
- »» Honeysuckle
- »» Jasmine
- »» Kiwi
- »» Mandevilla

Roles vines can play include

- »» Cloaking or disguising a fence (especially if it's unattractive; or just use vines to make it into a more substantial barrier)
- »» Climbing a trellis that's either against a wall or fence or out in the open (if well-supported)

- » Covering a gazebo to give shade and privacy as well as beauty
- » Decorating a pillar, arbor, or pergola, adding shade and beauty as well as making a major contribution to your garden landscape
- » Adding extra, vertical color to your garden (which is especially nice if your garden is small or you want to give it a feeling of enclosure)
- » Draping over an outbuilding or shed, an old or dead tree trunk, or another larger structure in need of some softening or disguise
- » Providing flowers and edible fruit for decorating and eating

Note: Even ridiculously strong vines can't help you swing from tree to tree, namely because they're attached to the ground and not-so-attached at the top. If you really don't want to stay grounded, Chapter 19 can give you info on installing a tire swing. For much more information on vines, please turn to Chapter 14. I address climbing roses in more detail in Chapter 9.



WARNING

Some vines are rogues. They may smother or pull down supports, provide a haven for porch- or trellis-munching insects, shed too much, or produce unwanted many seedlings. A few to watch out for are akebia, Chinese wisteria, English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, Oriental bittersweet, porcelain vine, trumpet creeper, and wintercreeper. I've seen some of these vines used very effectively in certain circumstances. Just be careful and know that they can outgrow their welcome. For more info on invasive vines, check out www.invasive.org/species/vines.cfm.

The World Is Flat: Caring for Your Lawn

Some gardeners love lawn care; others think it's just a necessary chore. Whichever way you feel, one thing can't be denied: Lawns, even small ones, can define a garden. They frame and provide a backdrop for all your other plants. If your lawn looks shabby, unfortunately, the rest of your garden creations just don't look as good.

I appreciate that everyone these days is pressed for time and can't spend the time on manicuring their turf like golf course managers do, so in Chapter 11, I give you the basic, nitty-gritty information so that your lawn can do you proud without taking too much time away from the rest of your creative garden pursuits.

