

Chapter 1

Getting Ready for Gardening

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding how plants are named
 - ▶ Examining flowering plants
 - ▶ Checking out trees, vines, and shrubs
 - ▶ Managing your lawn
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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 III of this book), or being able to grow your own food (Part IV), or just having a great excuse to play in the dirt (Part V), but for most people, the plants make everything worthwhile.

Of course, keeping your plants alive and making them look their best involves a lot of preparation. This book contains information on caring for your garden plants throughout, but you should especially read through the first few chapters if you really want your plants to grow, thrive, and look their absolute best.

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 aisles, ask better questions, and treat your plants right.

“Hello, my name is . . . ”: 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. 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!*

Botanical names

The *botanical name* is the proper or scientific name of a plant. It consists of two parts: the genus name and 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 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 famous, mostly shade-loving plants named hostas, and *undulata* describes the type of hosta it is — a hosta with an undulating leaf shape.

Sometimes the botanical name has a third name, right after the species name, known as the variety. A *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*, or cultivated variety. Cultivars are usually named by the people who developed or discovered them, and they're often maintained through cuttings, line-bred seed propagation, or tissue culture. In other words, they're cultivated (humans grow, improve, and develop them). An example is *Lychnis coronaria* 'Angel's Blush.'

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 because of cultivation, or it can occur naturally through bee pollination between two different plants.



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.

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.

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.

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. You probably already know most of them, 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! In the figure, the *taproot* is the main root of the plant; the *stolon*, or *runner*, is a horizontal stem that spreads through the ground to help some perennials propagate.

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!

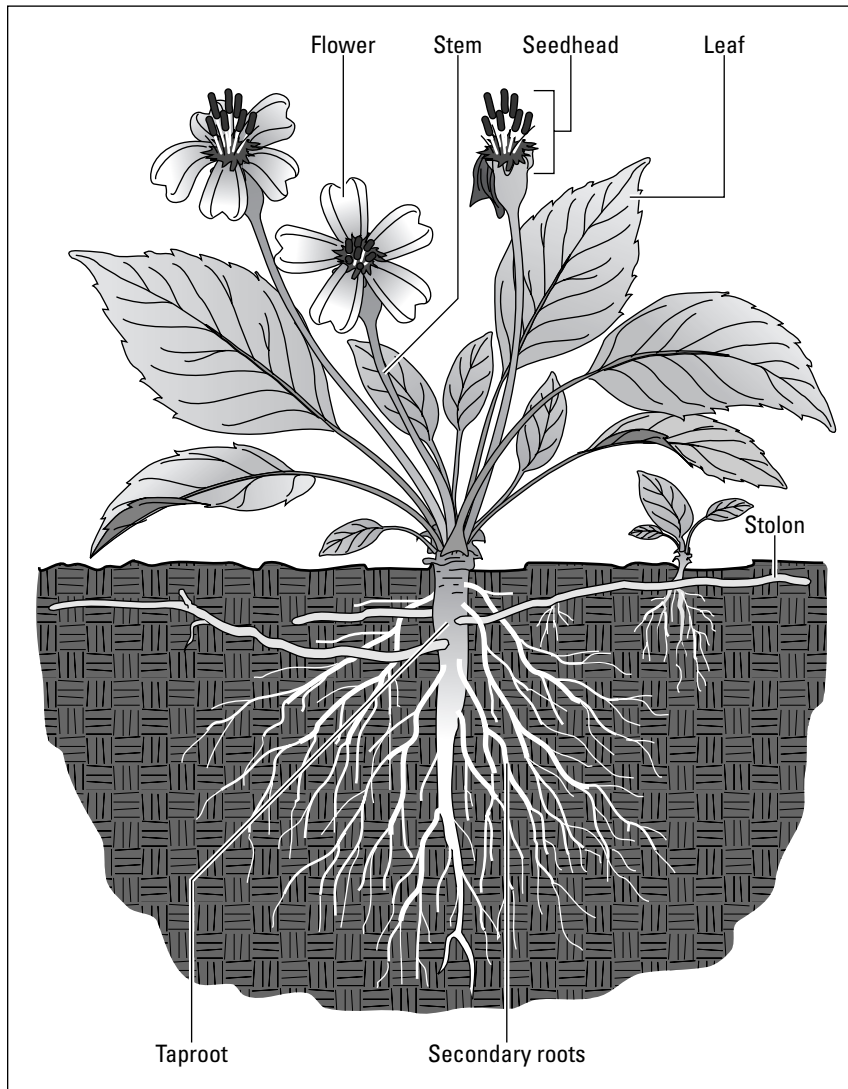


Figure 1-1:
The basic parts of a perennial plant, above and below ground.

Bringing in Beauty 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 huge variety 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” become perennials. See the upcoming section titled “Perennial plants” for more information.)

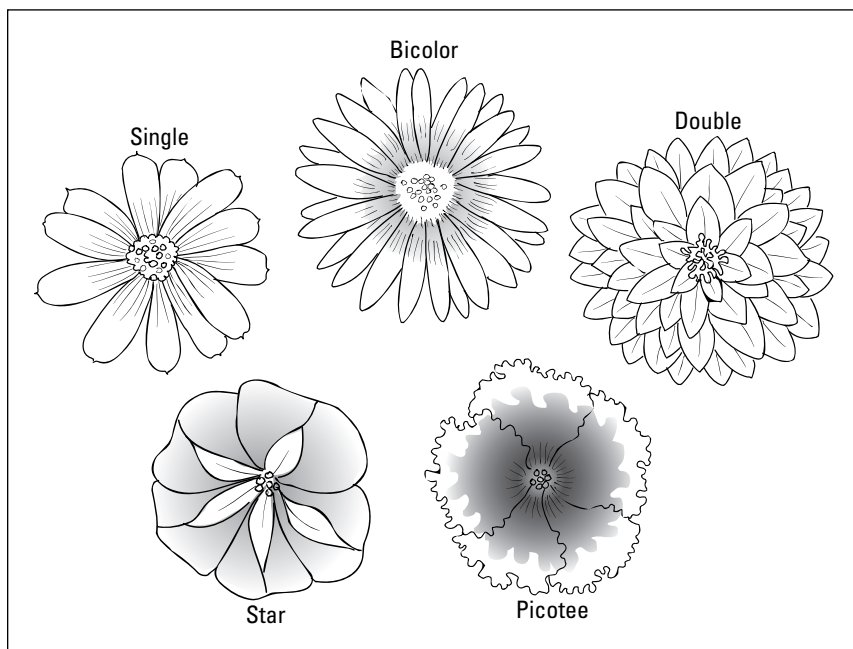


Figure 1-2:
Flowers
come in a
wide variety
of sizes and
shapes, as
these
popular
flowers
show.

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 hard to kill. Indeed, some of them keep blooming their cheery heads off even when you neglect them.

More sophisticated 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 planting perennials — see the section later in the chapter!)

You can use annuals

- ✓ To fill an entire flowerbed (this popular use is why some places call annuals *bedding plants*)
- ✓ In container displays — in pots, windowboxes, patio planter boxes, and more
- ✓ To fill a hanging basket
- ✓ To edge a walkway
- ✓ To "spot" color in a perennial bed
- ✓ In edging and as decoration for a vegetable or herb garden
- ✓ To cover over or at least distract from a fading spring bulb display

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!



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.) See Chapter 4 for more info on watering.

You can't deny that regular doses of plant food significantly boost your annuals (make sure you apply it according to directions). 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.

Favorite annuals

If you shop earlier in spring (before the garden center has been picked clean, I mean) or go to a place with a big selection, you see lots of choices. If you find certain types too boring or common, look around for alternatives — one big trend these days is familiar annuals in new colors, even bicolors. Get creative! Have some fun! Here are some popular annuals:

- ✓ **Sun-lovers:** Angelonia, California poppy, cleome, cosmos, geranium, lobelia, marigold, million bells, nasturtium, nicotiana, petunia, portulaca, salvia, and zinnia
- ✓ **Shade-lovers:** Ageratum, cineraria, coleus, forget-me-not, impatiens, nemophila, pansy, primrose, sweet William, vinca, wax begonia
- ✓ **Unusual, offbeat, but still easy annuals:**
 - **Collinsia:** An easily grown and graceful plant that looks similar to a blue snapdragon
 - **Eustoma:** A plant with very long lasting, silk-like flowers
 - **Feverfew:** An annual covered with double, mostly white chrysanthemum-like flowers
 - **Annual foxglove:** A plant with charming, nodding flowers on a tall spike, adding a dramatic vertical element to any garden
 - **Honesty (money plant):** An annual grown for its translucent quarter-shaped seed pods that make it choice for dried arrangements
 - **Larkspur:** A plant that's easy to grow by directly sowing the seeds in your garden in the early spring
 - **Nemophila:** A plant with sky-blue cup flowers on compact mounded plants
 - **Nierembergia:** A ground-hugging plant covered with purple cup-shaped flowers
 - **Stock:** An annual with heavenly fragrance and flowers from white to pink to purple
 - **Torenia:** A flower that looks like an open-faced snapdragon on compact plants, in shades of blue, pink and white.

Raising annuals from seed

Of course you can raise annuals from seed! 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!

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.)

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.

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.

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. These pseudo-annuals

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.

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*? 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. Chapter 7 can give you tips on division.

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 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. They're especially nice for shady areas where lawn won't grow.

Some favorite groundcovers include ajuga, candytuft, creeping phlox, epimedium, ivy, lamium, lily-of-the-valley, pachysandra, sweet woodruff, and verbenas.

For details on groundcovers, please turn to Chapter 12.

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.

Favorite perennials

Lots of places offer perennials these days. The garden centers in spring and early fall are full of them. Unless the place is especially big or sophisticated, you'll find mostly common, tried-and-true choices. If you get a taste for the

more unusual perennials, or common ones in uncommon colors, turn to mail-order or Internet shopping. What's out there may astound you — thousands and thousands of fascinating and beautiful plants await!

Here are some favorites:

- ✓ **Sun perennials:** Black-eyed Susan, coneflower, coreopsis, daylily, delphinium, gaura, hardy geranium, iris, penstemon, peony, phlox, pincushion flower, poppy, Russian sage, salvia, sedum, and Shasta daisy
- ✓ **Shade perennials:** Astilbe, bergenia, bleeding heart, brunnera, ferns, foamflower, goatsbeard, hellebore, heuchera, hosta, Solomon's seal, spiderwort, and violet

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.



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.

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

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 bunch of berries from a tree planted right in the front yard.

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 13 gives you the information you need to get started on growing your own vegetables. Chapter 14 is devoted to herbs and how you can grow them to enhance the dishes that come out of your kitchen. And Chapter 15 gives you the lowdown on the different kinds of fruit that you can grow and enjoy.

Working with Woody (or Viney) Plants

Woody plants consist of shrubs, some vines, and trees. Though I come to this group last in this chapter, it's probably a more important garden element than annuals and perennials simply because of the space that woody plants take up over the long term. 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. Yes, the leaves, flowers, fruits, berries, and seeds may fade and fall off, but the rest of the plant, its "bones," so to speak, 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.



The difference between a shrub (or bush) and a tree can be pretty tenuous. *Shrubs* usually have multiple stems that branch close to the ground, and the plants are often at least as wide as they are tall. *Trees* are usually higher than they are wide, tend to be larger than shrubs, and usually have one or just a few predominant stems or trunks. These definitions become foggier when a very large shrub gets pruned to one stem to look like a tree or a small tree is trained to have multiple stems and is pruned to be a hedge. In these cases, are they trees or shrubs? Your call is as good as mine!

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, 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 and, in many cases, a denser-growing profile.

Favorite shrubs for home landscapes include

- ✓ **Flowering:** Azalea, broom, buckeye, burning bush, daphne, flowering quince, forsythia, fothergilla, hibiscus, hydrangea, mock orange, smoke bush, sweetshrub, and winterberry
- ✓ **Broadleaf evergreen (with spring flowers and more-or-less evergreen foliage):** Andromeda, aucuba, barberry, boxwood, camellia, cotoneaster, gardenia, holly, laurel, mahonia, manzanita, mountain laurel, nandina, oleander, rhododendron, and rock rose
- ✓ **Evergreen:** Some cedars, some false cypresses, hemlock, juniper, 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)
- ✓ 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, deckside, or privacy plantings

For much more on shrubs, please turn to Chapter 11.

Trees

Trees can raise your property value, improve air quality, prevent erosion, lower your air conditioning costs, 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. 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, crape myrtle, 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)
- ✓ Decorative beauty due to foliage (including fall color!)
- ✓ Shelter and food for birds and other wild creatures

For much more information on trees in general, please turn to Chapter 11. For info on fruit and nut trees, check out Chapter 15.

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 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 are

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ Akebia | ✓ Honeysuckle |
| ✓ Bougainvillea | ✓ Ivy |
| ✓ Clematis | ✓ Jasmine |
| ✓ Climbing hydrangea | ✓ Kiwi |
| ✓ Climbing roses | ✓ Mandevilla |
| ✓ Creeping fig | ✓ Trumpet creeper |
| ✓ Dutchman's pipe | ✓ Wisteria |
| ✓ Grape | |

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 12. I address climbing roses in more detail in Chapter 9.

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 10, 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.