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Planting a spring garden

It is possible to have a garden in bloom from May through October. However, it takes experience, knowledge and a lot of planning time. While you gain experience and knowledge it's easier to plan a garden that is at its peak during a single season.

For example, you might plan a spring garden for the front yard and publicly welcome this most awaited of seasons, and a more private summer garden for the back when you tend to work and play outdoors more.

Pat
Leuchtman

Between
The Rows

Everything seems to burst into bloom in the spring, trees, shrubs, bulbs and perennials. And as delicate as all this exuberant bloom is, the loveliness is intense, coming as it does after the chill bleak days of winter.

A small flowering tree or two can be a wonderful focal point in the yard. The flowering dogwood is a beautiful native tree that blooms in June. Varieties that produce pink or red flowers are available as well as the more familiar white. They don't mind acid soil or even some shade, but should be kept watered.

The hawthorns are not very commonly grown, partially because they are actually thorny and pruning can be difficult. However, they are hardy, reliable trees producing dense blossom in the spring. *Crataegus oxyacantha Paulii* is one the best and most recommended. They rarely grow more than 15 feet tall.

Another small but hardy and undemanding tree is the pink weeping Japanese Higan cherry. It only reaches 15 feet in height and the graceful branches are a cascade of pink bloom in June.

Many shrubs flower in the spring. There are the spectacular rhododendrons in every color from creamy white to yellow, pink, orange, red, and magenta. If you live where the weather is particularly severe there are a few deciduous azaleas that are harder than the broadleaf evergreen rhododendrons and produce equally lovely flowers.

Our own native laurel with its shiny foliage and pink blossoms is similar to the rhododendron. Both love the moist, acid new England soil especially if its rich in humus and the roots which grow close to the surface are kept mulched.

When planting young shrubs its important to remember how much spate they will occupy when mature and allow for this or very soon they'll be cramped and overcrowded. This isn't good for the shrubs and you won't be able to admire them to best advantage.

Beneath a flowering tree or in front of a shrub border those harbingers of spring, flowering bulbs can provide sun drenched color. You have your choice of the little bulbs, scillas, snowdrops, crocus and grape hyacinths which bloom earliest of all and can even be planted in the lawn where they will naturalize and spread. A few weeks after blooming the lawn can be mowed and you needn't think about them again until their dauntless flowers greet you next spring.

The more familiar daffodils and narcissus will fill your spring garden with sunshine, although there are white and pink varieties as well. If you have the room, many daffodils will multiply and naturalize. Just remember to cut off spent blos-

soms (or bring lots of bouquets into the house) and allow the foliage to ripen for six weeks before you cut it down.

Tulips will not give you so many years of bloom, but they are available in so many sizes, and colors and forms from the stately darwin to the fanciful, fringed parrot tulip that they can be forgiven the shortness of their life. Also, the bulbs tend to be cheaper.

Many wildflowers bloom in the spring and I know a number of people who have encouraged a small spring wilderness around the base of a tree in their yard.

The white flowered trillium with its three large petals and whorl of three leaves is very easy to grow preferring a somewhat shady location with moist but well drained humusy soil. Given minimum care it will multiply and form a large clump.

The red or purple trillium is also about six to 18 inches tall, but the flower is smaller and less spectacular. This trillium is noted for its smell - which is not pleasant accounting for its nickname stinking Benjamin.

Bloodroot is another extraordinarily beautiful and fragile wildflower. Its too delicate to survive picking, but given a sunny or only slightly shady location and a moist, rich humusy soil it will spread and multiply.

A third hardy wildflower with essentially the same requirements is the Eastern or wild columbine which will produce pink, yellow or purple spurred flowers on two foot plants. Once established it will tolerate heavy shade and dry spells. Yes, Spring is a party, a celebration and you can bring the flowers.



Apple blossoms are in season throughout the county.

Recorder/Chuck Blake