



A quarterly online magazine published for Master Gardeners in support of the educational mission of UF/IFAS Extension Service.

## Adaptive Gardening

By Debi Ford, Master Gardener

Gardening is an activity that anyone can enjoy but sometimes physical limitations keep some folks from enjoying the many benefits that come with planting and watching something grow. Here are some handy tips to get you back outside and get your hands dirty!

### Safety 1<sup>st</sup>!

Make sure you have safe access from both inside and outside. Sturdy ramps and railings can help make your travels to and from the garden safe. Pathways should be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other manner of getting around the garden and of a surface that allows for easy maneuvering. Crushed stone or shell with a solid base or pavers will make getting around easier. Keep pathways clear of any obstacles such as hoses or garden tools.

When the heat of summer sets in, sometimes it's more pleasant to save gardening until it's a little cooler in the early evening. Adequate lighting in the area and pathways will help keep you aware of your surroundings.

### Consider Raised Planters

There are many good raised planters available that can take the place of in-ground beds. Whether you edge a path with long flower-box style planters or place a table top style that allows wheelchair access, there are many opportunities to grow. Of course, you won't have a deep

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area in which to plant, so choose plants that are drought tolerant or small plants that will have a shallow root system that won't require a deep planter box. You can grow a variety of flowers and vegetables, even vining types if you securely attach a trellis. Certain plants, such as melons and squash, are still more suitable to in-ground planting. However, there are many others from which to choose. Self-watering grow boxes are another alternative. You can purchase complete kits or find directions on the internet to construct your own.

There are even worktables that come with a faucet that you can attach to a hose so you can plant seeds, transplant seedlings, give them a good watering, and then wash up before heading inside. *Handy tip: Take some hand soap and a hand towel out with you and keep it on your table to make clean up a breeze.*



Photo credits: Creative Commons

### Watering

All plants need irrigation, that's no surprise. Consider installing a drip irrigation system that you can tailor to your specific needs. You can retrofit an existing irrigation system for drip irrigation. If you'd rather get your hands wet, consider a coil hose, which don't kink up as much, is easier to carry around and stays compact as opposed to a traditional hose which can be heavy and bulky, especially when filled with water. An extension wand can help you reach areas further back or water hanging baskets.

### Gardening Tools

There are many options for hand tools to make adaptive gardening accessible. From easier-to-hold special grips to equipment with extended handles that increase your reach, you can find tools for every type of gardening chore.

With a little time and planning, you can be outside enjoying your gardening experience, but don't forget the sun screen!

### References

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<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/raised-beds.html>



Photo credit: Creative Commons

## Quarryhill Botanical Garden—A Wild Asian Woodland in California

By Vicki Critchlow, Master Gardener



All Photo credits: Vicki Critchlow

Quarryhill Botanical Garden is a hidden gem. Located deep in the rolling hills of California wine country, it exhibits one of the largest collections of wild-sourced Asian plants in the world. When one visits the garden and sees its lush plantings and its well-established trees—some of them 50 to 60 feet tall—one cannot help but be in awe to learn that the entire garden is the result of seeds planted a mere 30 years ago. The garden, situated on 25 acres of rocky, steep hillside which was the remains of abandoned quarries, is not a traditional botanical garden. In addition to being extremely hilly with steep winding pathways, the garden is unmanicured and unfertilized, kept as if it is in the wild. Although the climate at Quarryhill is dissimilar to the climate of East Asia, the plants thrive because of the easily draining soil and added irrigation.

The former owner of the property, Jane Davenport Jansen, purchased the land, consisting of about 40 acres, in the 1960's for a weekend retreat from San Francisco. She initially planted vineyards on the property, some of these are still in production on lands below the botanical garden. In 1987, Ms. Jansen decided to clear and plant a garden on the hilly quarry area. She and her garden designer decided to focus on Asian plants because loosening visitor restrictions created the opportunity for plant collectors to enter China. This decision allowed her to take advantage of the rich diversity of plants native to Asia. In fact, approximately 1/8 of the world's plant species originated in East Asia.

Her designer and staff members made an expedition to China and Japan in the fall of 1987 to collect seeds for the garden. This was the first of more than 20 such expeditions to East Asia, each of which lasted four to six weeks. Every plant in the garden began from seed collected during these expeditions. During the early expeditions, representatives performed "broad collecting," meaning that they collected almost everything unless they thought the plant was too aggressive or could pose an escape risk. On later expeditions, they confined themselves to collecting seed of rare and endangered species from China, Japan, India, Nepal and Myanmar. Representatives from Quarryhill joined with plant hunters from other institutions, such as the Royal Botanical Garden in Kew, the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden, Howick Arboretum, and The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, on these treks deep into the mountains of these countries.

You can read about these expeditions, some of them physically taxing and dangerous, on the Quarryhill Botanical Garden website, <http://www.quarryhillbg.org/home.html>

One of the major missions of Quarryhill is to conserve plants and slow species loss. They carefully store seed from the expeditions in appropriate conditions. They bank some seeds for the future, share some with other institutions, and germinate some in the Quarryhill greenhouse for planting in the garden.



Three groups of plants are benefitting from the garden's current focus. These three groups, classified as "charismatic mega-flora," are plants that are easily identifiable by the public and can act as flagships for conservation. The groups are magnolias, maples, and roses.

*Magnolia sinica* is possibly the most threatened plant in the garden. Quarryhill has one of only two of these rare magnolias existing in the US, and one of only 50 remaining in the world.

*Acer pentaphyllum*, an extremely rare maple, is successfully growing in an isolated conservation grove of 200 specimens planted in the spring of 2009. *Acer pentaphyllum* occurs naturally only in the mountains of western Sichuan, China, 10,000 to 12,000 feet above sea level. It grows along the Yalong River, a main tributary to the Yangtze River. When the construction of the dams along the Yangtze is complete, the trees' natural habitat will be under water. The goal of the *Acer pentaphyllum* project is to produce seed for seed banking, distribution to other botanic gardens and scientific institutions, and, most importantly, repatriation to China for replanting.

In 2015, Quarryhill became a partner of the National Phenology Network, which, among other things, documents how the life cycles of plants respond to climate change. Trained volunteers observe selected trees twice a month to record their status in ten areas—breaking leaf buds, leaves, increasing leaf size, colored leaves, falling leaves, flowers or flower buds, open flowers, fruits, ripe fruits and recent fruit or seed drop.

It is well worth a visit to Quarryhill Botanical Garden. You will walk along peaceful gravel pathways amongst ancestors of roses, camellias, rhododendrons, magnolias, maples, dogwoods, peonies, lilies and more. You will cross footbridges over tranquil ponds with gushing waterfalls. If you hike to the top of the highest hill, you can rest on a bench under the Tibetan prayer flags and overlook the Sonoma Valley.

Quarryhill participates in the Reciprocal Admissions Program of the American Horticultural Society, as does our Florida Botanical Gardens, and gives free admission to current members of the society.

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## Frightening Foliage

By Theresa Badurak, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator

October brings dry breezes, costumes, candy, and jack-o-lanterns. But jack-o-lanterns aren't the only scary plant life in fall. Poisonous plants haunt our gardens, parks, and open spaces. Even poisonous plants can be beautiful and provide for wildlife. One simply needs to know the qualities (good and bad) of the poisonous plants they cultivate. Let's look at some common poisonous plants that haunt your Florida garden and learn a little more. This is not an exhaustive list of poisonous plants in Florida so be sure to learn all you can about your green garden friends—especially if you have pets or young children.

Luckily, there are not many common garden plants that will make you scratch and break out in a rash, but there are a few. Always wear gloves when gardening—to protect your hands from numerous abuses. The most well-known among the itch-causing plants is good old poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). The itch-causing chemical urushiol is what causes the burning, swelling, and rash from poison ivy. But while you might find poison ivy irritating, its berries are a wonderful food source for birds, raccoons and other wildlife. Urushiol is also found in Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthefolius*), Florida's most-hated invasive plant. Not everyone will react to this one, but it's still best to wear gloves and long sleeves when removing this garden alien.



Left: Poison ivy. Right: Brazilian pepper. Photo credits: UF/IFAS

The milky sap, or latex, from milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*), croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), and pencil tree (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) can also cause skin irritation, so cover up when working with these plants. There are protective lotions one can apply before working among these plants, as well as soaps designed to help wash the irritants away. If you are especially sensitive, ask your doctor about the best options to protect your skin.

Some spooky plants can “sting” you: heart-leaf nettle (*Urtica chamaedryoides*, a true stinging nettle) and the tread-softly plant (*Cnidioscolus stimulosus*) are two common examples in our area. Both plants have tiny glass-like stinging hairs for defense. One brush against these plants can result in an hour or more with a burning sensation. The reaction is similar in both: a stinging sensation sometimes accompanied by a rash. One may bring (some) relief to the affected skin by washing the area and applying a paste of baking soda and water.

The most frightening of all are the plants that are poisonous or toxic when eaten. Reactions can range from stomachache to death and a variety of horrible symptoms in between. Most of us know not to eat plants we don’t know to be edible, but what about our children and pets? Let’s explore some common toxic plants:

- Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
- Azaleas (*Rhododendron spp.*)
- Lilies (several genera in the lily family)
- Angel’s trumpet (*Brugmansia spp.*)
- Devil’s trumpet (*Datura spp.*)
- Hollies (*Ilex spp.*)
- Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)
- Caladiums (*Caladium x hortulanum*)
- Philodendron (*Philodendron spp.*)
- Lantana (*Lantana camara*)
- Rosary pea (*Abrus precatorius*)
- Castor bean (*Ricinus communis*)
- Deadly nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*)



Top: Oleander. Below: Azalea.

Photo Credits: UF/IFAS



The most important thing to remember is to be smart about what you grow, not fearful. A poisonous plant should not be considered a “bad” plant, only one to plant and care for with caution. Keep them out of the reach of pets and young children, but don’t be frightened—even poisonous plants bring beauty to our gardens and provide for wildlife!

(This article has appeared in TBN Weekly)

Right: Rosary Pea;  
Below left: Lantana. Below right: Castor Bean.  
Photo credits: UF/IFAS



## A Poem: Banal Sojourn by Wallace Stevens

Discussed by Dianne L. Fecteau, Master Gardener.

I recently bought a book of poetry titled "Garden Poems," selected and edited by John Hollander (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets, Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1996). In it was this poem by Wallace Stevens. All of us who garden here in Florida can relate to "moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom" and "summer is like a fat beast". The word "princox", occurring two times in this poem, means "a pert or insolent youth", according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Another possible meaning, although the Oxford English Dictionary considers this unlikely, is from the Latin adjective, "praecox" meaning, "blooming or maturing early." In this poem, though, I wonder if Stevens might be using it in that sense. The evening sky, "that bliss of stars" reminds him of a changing season. Yet, he concludes, "One feels a malady". Webster defines "malady" as "an undesirable or disordered condition". Perhaps the coming of evening or the change of a season does leave us a bit unsettled, signaling, as both do, the passage of time.

Two wooden tubs of blue hydrangeas stand at the foot of the stone steps.  
 The sky is a blue gum streaked with rose. The trees are black.  
 The grackles crack their throats of bone in the smooth air.  
 Moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom.  
 Pardie! summer is like a fat beast, sleepy in mildew,  
 Our old bane, green and bloated, serene, who cries,  
 'That bliss of stars, that princox of evening heaven!' reminding of seasons,  
 When radiance came running down, slim through the bareness.  
 And so it is one damns that green shade at the bottom of the land.  
 For who can care at the wigs despoiling the Satan ear?  
 And who does not seek the sky unfuzzed, soaring to the princox?  
 One has a malady, here, a malady. One feels a malady.

## Pictures from the Quilt Garden at the North Carolina Arboretum By Dianne L. Fecteau, Master Gardener.

I visited the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville this summer. One of the displays was of a quilt garden. According to the notes they posted, this garden "represents an interpretation of traditional quilt block patterns common to the Southern Appalachian region." It uses what Victorian era gardeners called "carpet bedding". This is "planting in masses of harmonious or contrasting colored foliage and flowers to last one season." They replant the garden each season and change the block pattern every two years.



Photo credits: Dianne L. Fecteau



### Send your Articles and Photos

**The next Issue of *The Dirt* is October 2019. The deadline for articles is January 5.** Share your passion for gardening with your fellow Master Gardeners by writing an article for *The Dirt*. Include images where possible. However, if you include images they must fall under one of the following guidelines:

- your own
- UF/IFAS image
- open access image, as in wiki-commons, where all rights are open and the photographer is credited
- used with the express permission of the photographer

When you do send images, please do not embed them within the article. Include them separately. Please send all files as Word files. I cannot edit .pdf files.

Do you like to photograph plants or trees but don't like to write? Send me your photos with a description, even without an accompanying article, and I'll publish them with the description as well as a credit to you, the photographer.

Send your articles, images, and your photos to Dianne Fecteau at [dianne@kendiacorp.com](mailto:dianne@kendiacorp.com). My phone number is 727.366.1392.

All articles are subject to editing. In addition, Theresa Badurek, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator, reviews and approves all articles prior to publication.

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