

Lawn and Garden

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Homeowners' thoughts turn to gardening

The recent — and long-awaited — arrival of spring has triggered many an itchy green thumb. If

you're like most homeowners, you're anxious to get out in your garden and make things grow. And, regardless of its size, a garden serves to enhance and beautify your home.

Experienced gardeners will tell you that there's nothing quite like the thrill of seeing the fruits of your labor spring up from the earth, providing you with a cornucopia of color and texture.

Some people prefer to stick strictly to flowers, while others opt for a mix of flowers and vegetables. There has also been a resurgence of interest in herb gardens. Many people find that several varieties of herbs — in addition to supplying good food seasonings — also provide excellent ground cover.

Variety and Color

Even if you don't have enough space for long, sweeping vistas of flowerbeds, or even a vegetable patch, you can still pack a lot of variety and color into small flowerbeds.

If you have limited space, don't forget that flowers can be easily planted in narrow strips along fences and shrubs as colorful, attractive borders. Climbing flowers such as clematis and portulaca are also an option if you can only expand upwards and not outwards.

Containers and Window Boxes

Container gardens are a popular choice for many homeowners,

because they don't generally require as much maintenance when it comes to weeding. If you opt for containers, you may find you have to water them more often. Conversely, after heavy rains, you'll have to drain the pots to make sure your plants don't drown in too much water.

Window boxes are also a popular way of adding some extra color and excitement to your home if a garden isn't viable. Boxes brimming over with cheery, cascading annuals not only dress up your windows, they also serve to make your home look more cosy and inviting.

Planning Your Garden

When planning this year's garden, take stock of what already exists including any bulbs. (You won't want to remove them accidentally.) If you have quite a few perennials — plants that return year after year — you may want to limit your purchases to annuals (flowers that grow for one season — like impatiens and petunias — and don't last over the winter).

And if you have areas of your garden that are sloping or prone to erosion, you may want to incorporate some ground covers to help keep the soil in place.

There are many varieties of ground covers available through gardening centres. Some homeowners are even opting to replace their entire lawns with hardy, low-maintenance ground covers.

Others prefer to try and capture the look and feel of a natural meadow and plant wildflowers. If you're

interested in recreating a natural look, or finding out what type of ground covers would thrive best in your yard or garden, talk to the experts at your local nursery or gardening centre.

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POOL & SPA Tips
 with **Mike Finn**

Safe chemical storage #2

Here are some more safety hints that were not included last week.

As important as it is to use precautions when using a swimming pool or spa product, the same care should be taken when the products are not being used. Safe chemical storage means using good old-fashioned common sense.

- Many pool sanitizers and oxidizers are corrosive, do don't store them near metal products like bicycles, lawn mowers, cars, etc., because they may cause rust.

- Never store liquids directly above sanitizers and oxidizers. They may accidentally leak and contaminate packaging or sanitizers.

- Never store household cleaners, detergents, bleaches, paints, oils, greases, waxes, solvents, ammonia, fertilizers or gasoline near the pool sanitizers and oxidizers. All of these are incompatible with pool sanitizers and oxidizers and, if accidentally contact each other, could cause a chemical reaction that will give off irritating, toxic or noxious fumes; or result in a fire or explosion.

Mike Finn is owner of Acadian Pools, 134 Guelph St., Georgetown. For more information contact him at 873-3320.

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