



# MIXED BORDERS

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# Garden Beds & Borders



Elements/Examples



Plants & Combos



Resources



# INTRODUCTIONS

gardentruenorth.com/classes.html

- Welcome t... Gmail Hayward, WI W... Titus Salon TanglePatterns Craftsy - Logged out Dictionary and Thes... Pandora Radio ravelry TheWheels

*Garden.True.North*

BLOG

CLASSES

PICTURE GALLERY

CONTACT

## Classes & Handouts

**WITC Classes** ([click here for registration information](#))

All are on Thursday, 10:00 to Noon Webinars

- Feb 11, 2021- **Intensive Gardening**

Handouts (click on the title for the PDF file):

Intensive Gardening PowerPoint Notes, Intensive Gardening Comparisons, Crop Rotations and Plants for Small Gardens, Square Foot Gardening Basics

- Mar 4-**Mixed Borders**

- Mar 25-**Ornamental Edibles**



# ELEMENTS & EXAMPLES





La Foce  
Tuscany









# Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

Mid-June Border









# Using Sedge as a Ground Cover

*Carex flacca* - Blue  
Green Sedge









# Consider the Seasons





# Types of Mixed Garden Borders

- Cottage
- Naturalist
- Woodland
- Prairie/Meadow
- Formal
- Rock
- Zen (Japanese)
- Shrub

Photo: Janesville Rotary Garden





# Components of Borders



- Softscape: Trees, plants, grass, mulches.
- Hardscape: Sidewalks, walls and fences, pavers, rocks, decks and patios.
- Décor: Water features, statuary, tree hangers, pottery, lighting.
- Supporting Features: Birdhouses, beehives, feeders, tree houses, trellises.

# Guidelines for Mixed Beds

- Keep border less than 3 feet or provide a path
- Plan border at its deepest point to be about 1 ½ times the height of the tallest plant (ex. 9' deep-tallest plant 6')
- Combine plants with similar requirements
- Use basic foliage color and plant shape as unifying elements
- Limit flower colors- too many colors confuse the eye
- Keep taller plants at the back and low creepers at the front
- Mounded plants & those with tall bloom stalks can go almost anywhere
- Limit flowering plants that reseed themselves heavily – they will need continual thinning
- Avoid flowering plants among edibles that demand pesticides to look good



# Add a Path





# Creating a garden border









## Right Plant, Right Place

Spikenard

*Aralia racemosa*

*Native, herbaceous  
perennial, part-sun*



# Tips on Mixing Edibles with Ornamentals

- Don't try to make it all edible
- Mix annuals & perennials but group them for ease of maintenance
- Keep diversity in mind so beneficial insects can help keep your garden healthy
- Light Rule of Thumb
  - If the part you eat is the fruit – needs 8 or more hours per day sunshine
  - If the part is a root – can tolerate a little less
  - If the part is the stem or leaf can handle slightly shady conditions





# Espalier



- Best used on plants that have flexible woody branches.
- Often used with apple trees
- Want to know more about this technique – go to this Master Gardener article:

<https://wimastergardener.org/article/espalier/>





## Pleaching

Flexible linden trees trained into a raised hedge using a plant-shaping technique called Pleaching. Over time, branches are interwoven. Light still reaches plants below.



# Size—Rule of Thirds

- Grouping of 3 plants are more pleasing
- Tallest plant should be  $\frac{1}{3}$  or  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the backdrop or focal point, then sequence down to next level by  $\frac{1}{3}$
- 3's work better than splitting in half
- Width of border should be  $\frac{1}{3}$  the width of the total area
- Each "height" should have equal space in bed



# Elements of a Garden



1. Overstory trees for shade
2. Understory
3. Tie together with shrubs
4. Interesting woodland floor
5. Add a few details





# Olbrich Garden, Madison WI

Shrub bed with  
arborvitae, spirea, moss



# Tips to growing sun loving plants in the shade

- Plants grow leggier in shade, so buy the bushiest, most compact specimens
- If you like a certain sun-loving plant but only have shade – try it there.
- When buying shade-tolerant plants, pick varieties that bloom early, before deciduous trees block the light during their most active growth

# Colors

- Dominate shade colors: white, blue, mauve, pink
- Daylilies can add splash of color
- Start with “anchor” plants like hydrangea or viburnum
- Light colors will stand out in shade





# Tips for planting under trees

- Avoid damaging tree roots
  - do not add soil on top of tree roots
  - gently plant between roots
  - do not cut into roots 2" or larger
  - use a layer of mulch no deeper than 2-4" thick
- Look to nature for inspiration in plant selection
- Be prepared to water the first year or two until plants are established
- Use containers to add color





# Add Containers

- To provide attractive elements to the garden
- To contain aggressive plants like mints
- To have some spare plants to move to perennial beds elsewhere
- To provide succession plantings







# BREAK/QUESTIONS?

DO YOU HAVE AN INTERESTING TREE,  
SHRUB, PERENNIAL COMBO?



# PLANTS & COMBOS



# Four Seasons of Interest

- Spring – bulbs, garden art
- Summer – perennials; blooming shrubs
- Fall – color, color, color
- Winter – Evergreens, seed heads and grasses



# Layers, borders, Drifts .....

- Layers: ground level, middle, understory, canopy
- Planting beds: mounded, perennial drifts, island, borders





# Ground Covers

- Good alternative to grass
- Less competitive than grass under trees and shrubs
- Relatively low maintenance
- Proper planting prep to avoid weeds
- Use instead of bark mulch









# Tips on When to Consider Ground Covers

- Problem areas
- Transition between lawn and taller plants
- Where grass doesn't grow
- Select based on year-round interest and plant needs
- Consider height
- Prepare soil as for other plants
- Look out for aggressive growers
- Good resource:  
University of Illinois  
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/groundcovers/about.html>

# Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)

- Evergreen, green, bronze or variegated
- One plant can fill a 3 foot square
- Full sun to part shade
- Avoid open or exposed areas – may suffer winter kill
- Minimal fertilization needed to keep plants healthy





# Deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*)

- Excellent ground cover for shaded areas
- Prefers moist, well drained soil
- Part to full shade
- Pest free
- Lift and divide overgrown plants
- Can be aggressive
- Cultivars: Beacon Silver, White Nancy



# Moneywort (*Lysimachus nummularia*)

- Aggressive-common name: Creeping Jenny
- Tolerate wide range of conditions, prefers shade with moist to wet organic soil
- Minimal fertilizer needed
- Monitor planting, pruning back and pulling plants that have overgrown space
- Cultivar: 'Aurea' – less aggressive





# Creeping Phlox (*Phlox subulata*)

- Full sun, moist well-drained soil
- Up to 8 inches high
- Trim up after flowering
- Slow growing



# Sedum Stonecrop



- Full sun to part shade
- Low-growing, can tolerate dry conditions
- Easy care



# Middle Layer

- Perennials and annuals
- Create some vertical interest
- Flowering shrubs
- Create multiple layers of interest from spring through fall
- Add annuals for consistent blooms or to fill in a bare spot for a season (can be a container plants)
- Mounded or plants with bloom stems can go almost anywhere
- Weave in self-seeders for a natural look



# Bulb and Perennial combos

## Hot, Dry Sun

- Bulbs: Daffadil, Hyacinth, Tulip
- Perennials: Bearded iris, Lamb's ear, yarrow

## Moist Soil (part shade)

- Bulbs: Fritillaria, Spanish Bluebell
- Perennials: Astilbe, Cardinal flower, Goatsbeard, Ligularia





## “Carefree Turf Blend” – Olbrich Gardens

Find a low-mow blend (using a blend of fine fescue grasses)

Chewings Fescue

Creeping Red Fescue

Hard Fescue

Slender Red Fescue

Blue Fescue



# Native Midwest Prairie Grasses

- Tallgrass species
  - Big Bluestem
  - Switchgrass
  - Prairie Cordgrass
- Midgrass Species
  - Little Bluestem
  - Prairie Dropseed
  - Sideoats Grama
- Shortgrass Species
  - Buffalograss
  - Blue Grama



*Native Bluestem*







Lettuce, viola,  
annuals, espalier  
tree, potted  
plants

Chanticleer Gardens,  
Delaware







## Chanticleer Gardens

Ferns, coral bells, espalier  
shrub, climbing vine,  
tulips, Pulmonaria  
(lungwort)



# Understory & Shrub - layer



- Provides shelter, windbreaks, background, vertical interest
- Can screen unwanted views and create privacy
- Creates interest in all seasons



# Understory- Small Trees & Shrubs

- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*)
- Black Chokeberry (*Aronia*)
- Dogwood (*Cornus*)
- Hazelnut (*Corylus*)
- Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla*)
- Forsythia
- Hydrangea
- Winterberry (*Ilex*)
- Ninebark (*Physocarpus*)
- Rhododendron
- Sumac
- Elderberry (*Sambucus*)
- Spirea
- Viburnum







Note: Hosta,  
grasses,  
perennials,  
shrubs

Chanticleer  
Gardens, Delaware





# Chanticleer Gardens

Azalea, tulips, hosta,  
ferns, oriental lilies,  
Bergenia (Pig Squeak)





# Spooner Agricultural Research Station

Ninebark, sedum, grasses





# Private Garden Siren, WI

Hosta, coneflower,  
grasses, Rubeckia





# Spooner Ag Research Station

Rubeckia, Coneflower,  
Hydrangea, Joe Pye  
Weed, Phlox, grasses





# Potager

Raised beds for Veggies  
& Annual Flowers,  
Elderberry, raspberries,  
rhubarb, ferns





Minnesota Landscape Arboretum



# Think about Maintenance















# QUESTIONS COMMENTS





# RESOURCES



# UW Extension Publications

- [www.learningstore.uwex.edu](http://www.learningstore.uwex.edu) – UW Extension gardening publications
- [www.wihort.uwex.edu](http://www.wihort.uwex.edu) – UW Urban Horticulture website

*All can be downloaded free or a paper copy purchased at the <http://learningstore.uwex.edu>*



# Books

- *The Garden Book of Wisconsin*, Melinda Myers
- *Cold Climate Gardening*, Lewis Hill
- *Flowerbeds & Borders in Deer Country*, Vincent Drzewucki Jr.
- *Landscaping with Native Plants of Wisconsin* and *Grow Native*, Lynn M. Steiner
- *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*, Tracy DiSabato-Aust



# More Books

- *The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden*, Roy Diblik
- *The Layered Garden*, David L. Culp
- W. George Schmid's *An Encyclopedia of Shade Perennials* -- book contains an extensive list of shade perennial plants
- *Planting in a Post-Wild World, Designing Plant Communities for Resilient Landscapes*, Thomas Rainer and Claudia West



# Web

- [www.hostalibrary.org](http://www.hostalibrary.org) - official directory of the American Hosta Society
- <https://woodyplants.nres.uiuc.edu/> – searchable woody plant database
- <http://garden.org/plantfinder/> National Gardening Association search engine for locating plants
- [www.perennialresource.com](http://www.perennialresource.com) Online library maintained by Walters Gardens



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