

TOM'S GARDEN

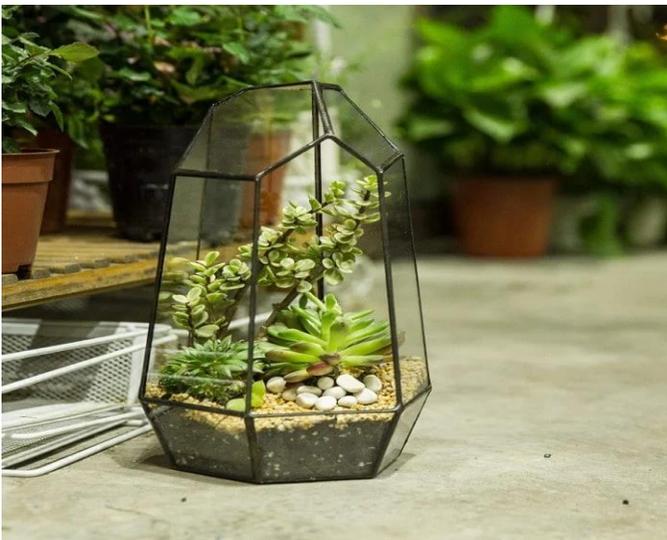
BLOG FEBRUARY 2023

Why not make a terrarium this winter?

Terrariums have become very popular lately. They allow you to grow a mini garden inside your home, no matter how little space you have. These little gardens are ideal for an apartment, kitchen, or to brighten up your office space.

There are two types of terrariums: open and closed. Each one takes a different strategy.

Open An open terrarium is open to the outside environment. Whatever air is available, will circulate around the plants. There is also less humidity in an open terrarium. This type is ideal for cacti, succulents and other plants that prefer drier conditions. Open terrariums do well inside and on the patio in summer. They will need to be watered and placed in bright light. An old teapot, clear bowl, or one of the many containers designed for a terrarium are ideal.



Closed A closed terrarium uses a lid and is not open to the outside environment.



This type of terrarium uses indirect light. Direct sunlight would “cook” the plants in a short period of time. This system creates a balance inside the container for moisture. You may need to remove the lid from time to time until that balance is achieved. This can take a little bit of trial and error. Plants that like moist, humid conditions do well in a closed terrarium. Ferns, ivy, and plants sold for fairy gardens can be very successful here. Dwarf type plants will grow slowly and will not need to be trimmed often. Closed terrariums need 4 layers of material for growing.

- 1) A drainage material such as gravel, pebbles, or coarse sand.
 - 2) A layer of activated charcoal.
 - 3) A sphagnum moss layer to prevent the soil from going into the drainage area.
 - 4) Soil layer. Use a pre-mixed soil for terrariums or a cactus and succulent mix.
- In both open and closed terrariums, be sure all the plants have the same lighting and watering needs and are compatible with each other.

You can add other items to make a terrarium one-of-a-kind. Stones, pieces of bark, or small twigs will add a nice touch. Use your imagination!

Some extra advice:

- *Keep terrariums out of direct sunlight
- *Avoid watering too much, there is no drainage hole. Don't let water stand in the bottom.
- *Prune the plants if they grow too large.
- *Remove the lid occasionally to let it air out.
- *Rotate the terrarium to have equal light all around.

Terrariums come in all shapes and sizes. Choose the one that makes you happy and gives you peace.

Deer Facts

I like to visit this subject each year because so many gardeners and landscapers have deer problems.

Spring-Summer

- *Hungriest in spring through summer
- *Feed mainly at dusk and dawn
- *Can jump up to 8-foot barriers from a standing position.
- *Creatures of habit – they establish routine paths for browsing
- *Dislike plants with strong odors, sharp taste, fuzzy or prickly leaves
- *Afraid of getting trapped in a narrow place

What You Can Do

Modify the environment: Select plants they don't like. Plant tasty plants near the house along a sidewalk, they don't like to walk on concrete.

Exclude them with a fence 8 feet tall.

Scare them: Noise makers or sensors that turn on lights or a spray of water.

Repel them: Commercial sprays or granules (need to be renewed after rain), human hair, bars of fragrant soap, animal urine, and, of course, a dog.

Use these methods early, before deer establish a routine.

Plant deer-resistant plants

Visit www.petittigardencenter.com to download the "Deer Resistant Plants Guide" For a short list of plants that work for me, year after year; Zinnia, marigold, any of the mints or herbs, bee balm, dahlias, dusty Miller, milkweed, sedum, and false indigo.

All vegetables and fruits will be eaten by deer.

Remember:

If deer are hungry, they will eat almost anything. Try not to let them create a grazing path.

Rudbeckia 'American Gold Rush'

The **Perennial Plant Association** has named 'American Gold Rush' its perennial plant of the year for 2023. A hybrid between several species of *Rudbeckia*, it has a compact habit, long blooming time, and the foliage stays healthy with resistance to powdery mildew and leaf spot, which is common for black-eyed Susans. It grows about 2 feet tall and wide with a rounded compact shape and likes full to part sun. This plant needs average soil with good drainage and not much fertilizer. A photo will be offered separately with the blog.

Can seeds be started in February?

Yes! But not everything!

Those of us who start seeds indoors, early, have the urge to get things going in late winter. That's usually not a good idea for most plants, but there are a few that don't mind and actually need the extra time.

Please don't start tomato plants yet...You'll be sorry! They will be too tall and lanky and will just go into shock mode when planted. The weather is often cool and rainy in May and tomatoes just won't grow until the weather warms. Start tomatoes in mid-March to early April.

There are a few plants that benefit from an early start. Onions and leeks need that extra time to mature before planting. Be sure the seeds are fresh, last years seeds won't work. Most other seeds will last more than one year.

Cabbage is a slow grower and would like to have a head start in February. Broccoli can also be started early indoors and will take a hard frost when planted outside.

Most peppers can be started early March, but the very hot peppers like Carolina Reaper take much longer to germinate and grow slowly. Use bottom heat with these seeds to speed germination and start them early.

Many of the herbs such as rosemary, thyme, lavender, and biennial parsley benefit from an early start. These seeds need a 24-hour soaking time in warm water to speed germination. Lettuce, arugula, and spinach can be started in February if you have a cold frame to place the plants in March or April.

Read the information on seed packets for individual planting information. A lot of flower seeds can be started 12 weeks before the last frost date, again, follow instructions on the seed packet.

Grow some micro-greens on a sunny windowsill in the house. They are wonderful to snip off for sandwiches and salads and are so easy to grow.

It isn't too early to plan that garden for 2023.

Try to include some native Ohio plants this year to provide a vital source of food and shelter for pollinators and wildlife. Native plants bloom and coincide with the needs of native insects that are so important to Ohio ecology. Native plants grow well in our soil and climactic conditions without any fussy treatment and at just the right time. The best location for a native garden is a sunny spot anywhere in your landscape. Phenology and pollinator gardens are sometimes looked upon as "weedy", but that is exactly what is needed by bees, wasps, flies and other important insects.



The pollinator garden doesn't have to be along the walk in front of the house, it can be in the back yard.

Grouping a variety of plants together helps pollinators find and feed on desirable flowers while using less energy searching for plants. Most native plants don't need fertilizing or even watering. Many are drought-tolerant during those dry summer months. Try to use a mixture of colors, textures, and bloom times to attract more and different insects. That also makes your garden more attractive for you to enjoy. each type of pollinator is attracted to different colors. Bees like purple, blue, yellow and white. Butterflies look for red, yellow, orange, and pink with a wide landing spot. Hummingbirds like bright colors, especially red and orange. Host plants will have an abundance of caterpillars that birds feed to their young fledglings. It can be a natural cycle of Mother Nature's grand plan, and forget about using insecticides, they won't be needed.

Different species of bees, butterflies and other pollinators are active at different times during the season. Monarchs usually arrive in late summer. Plant a variety of flowers that bloom at different times so there are blooms from early spring to late fall. Let those dandelions grow for early bees. Many of our native plants will provide nectar and host foliage all summer. Also, don't clean up everything in the fall. Leave some plants standing and build a small brush pile in the rear of the lot for winter feeding and protection for overwintering insects.

Visit: www.wildflower.org
www.nature.org and
www.monroe.cce.cornell.edu



Rudbeckia "American Gold Rush"

Photo: Walters Gardens



Photo from my pollinator garden.

Can you guess what caterpillar this is on the milkweed?