



Watch whom you invite to your garden party!

Some guests are most unwelcome and soon push others to the sidelines. These are the assertive and belligerent plants, soon running wild, quickly filling every space and that of their neighbor. Quite often, gardeners, grateful for a different plant, will rue the day they set it in the ground.

For example, most varieties of mint, while great to use in the kitchen, will invade and infiltrate a space before you realize it. My suggestion is to plant mint in a large container, no drainage holes and then sink the pot into the ground.

Sweet Autumn Clematis, so beautiful in bloom, heavenly in scent and loved by bees, can be considered invasive. This plant happily scrambles with such energy during the summer, one has to admire it. If you have an odd spot in your garden, a patch of soil with poor growing conditions begging for some attention, then this is the plant for you.

Common orange day lilies are often inherited in older gardens. They dig in their heels and refuse to budge. And while you may enjoy the faithful blooming each year, there comes a time when they must go, otherwise you drown in a sea of green leaves. But again, if you have lots of space, a generous spread of these sword-like leaves is an attractive sight during the summer.

Gardening is intimately connected to the journey we all make to find a place for ourselves. It displays our "Jekyll and Hyde" attitude, which mediates between the urge to obliterate and our urge to preserve. Should you ruthlessly pull up plants that you once loved or should you close both eyes and give them another

season? This decision is yours alone. Just remember – a garden must change; otherwise it becomes an antiquated affair.

Don't succumb to the black hole of time and energy by choosing high maintenance plants for your garden. Those divas who requite your continuous attention like spraying, dusting, dead-heading, tying, etc. Those who have to be coddled and are usually expensive. There is a national movement to create interest in our native plants, those that can weather harsh conditions, drought and air pollution, those that are less demanding and still reward you with their vigor and multi-season interest. Look for native plants in your garden center and nurseries.

You know it is spring when crows mob hawks, and scores of robins devour the last red holly berries. And Spring is definitely here when you see robins in the grass, listen intently to detect worms. Spring is also heralded by the magnificent hellebores orientalis (Lenten Rose) in colors ranging from burgundy to hot pinks, and the dependable Vinca with its deep blue blossom who invite you to stop and admire.

Now is the time to set out support for peonies before shoots become too tall.

Cut back Buddleia, Caryopteris and red twig dogwoods. All bloom on new growth. Prune roses when the buds begin to swell and when the forsythia blooms. Now is also the time to sit back, relax and enjoy nature's beauty.

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