

Shape your '80 crop—now

Now is sort of a lull between summer and fall — your garden's last fling of the season. In fact, there isn't much else you can do to or for your garden in September except sit back, set down, set out, and stand back.

Sitting down is my favorite part. Do just that. Pour yourself a cup of tea that you have spiced with mint from the garden and take a look at what you've got.

You and your garden have been through our annual ice storm and power failure; the chartreuse greens and pastels of spring; the dark lush greens and rich colors of July and August. You both need a break.

Do you like what you have? Are there any changes you would like to make?

VISIT OTHER gardens. Drive out to Cranbrook and Belle Isle, Greenmead in Livonia, Michigan State's campus in East Lansing or just walk around your own neighborhood and see what other people have done.

Ask a few questions — most gardeners rank just below new parents in their desire to talk, or temper into the wee hours about their charges.

Send away for a plant catalogue or two. They are invaluable sources of information on planting times and other esoteric rites.

Armed with sheaves of notes and myriads of fresh ideas, set down on paper a plan for next year's garden. What do you personally want in and from your garden — a season-long show of flowers; three to four months of fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs; or a combination of any or all of the above?

The plant catalogues or your local nurseryman will tell you what can and cannot be grown here. Use your own sense too.

YOU SAY you want to make better use of your fence than just to keep out the neighborhood urchins? Obviously, bouganvillea won't grow in Michigan, but wisteria will, and so will morning glories and clematis — all delightfully perennial.

Raspberries make a quick growing hedge. And when was the last time you had fresh raspberries? Throw in a short row of bush cherries and voila! Privacy, beauty and dessert.

Set out the plants now that will perform for you next year. Use your own sense here too. Obviously, it is not the correct time of year to set out tomatoes or begonias. These are tropical plants and grow in Michigan only on summer's suzerainty.

However, until just before the first frost, you can plant evergreens, iris, lilies, fruit trees, strawberries, raspberries, flowering shrubs and trees, all



gardening

Rod Brown

spring bulbs and grass.

Admittedly, none of them look like much now, but give their roots a chance to get established over late fall and winter and then, step 4: Stand back in the spring.

The writer is an area "weekend gardener" who learned horticulture at his grandmother's knee, at Michigan State University and through experience.

Forget pesticides; hire a homely toad

One of the best assistants a gardener can employ works for no pay.

The homely toad is a relentless exterminator. Its fast-draw tongue, uncoiling quicker than the eye can see, plucks harmful insects off flowers, vegetables, grass, or leaves, and even snaps them out of the air in mid-flight.

Emerging from hibernation in the spring, a hungry toad will eat up to 10,000 insects in three months. Cutworms, flies, grubs, sowbugs, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and beetles are all in its diet.

Naturalist Paul Zahl says either a toad or a frog can do the job equally well and both are "strategically located" to snare insects at ground level that birds sometimes miss.

"The toad is a natural insect trap," Dr. Zahl said. "Sluggish and slow-moving, it takes up a vantage point at dusk and then zaps nearly everything that comes within range."

Dr. Zahl views faster-moving frogs as more aggressive, but acknowledged that since frogs prefer to stay near a pond, toads may be more suited to most suburban gardens.

But he pointed out that both amphibians need moisture, and suggested that to keep a toad in a garden it is a good idea to provide it with a shallow pan of water.

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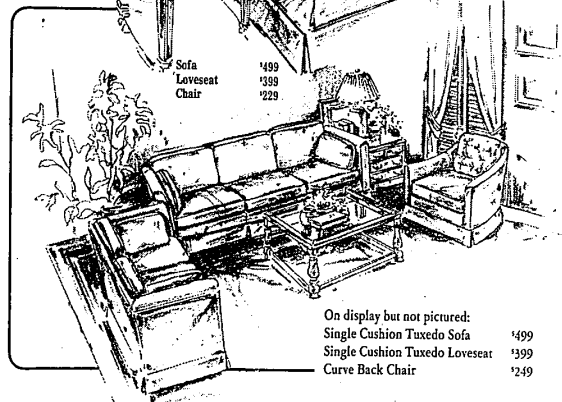
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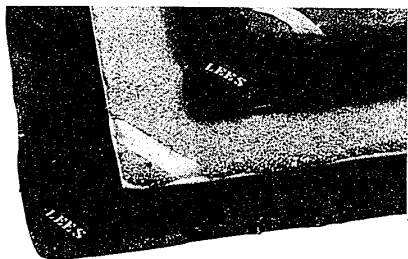
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