

# You can virtually garden by computer

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You won't be able to smell the roses, but if you have a computer and a modem, you can tour the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, stroll through classic gardens in Poland or Australia or just about any place else in the world.

You can browse through seed catalogs, download plans for a new deck, get software that will let you plan your own garden, consult gardening encyclopedias or check in with the local extension service to get the latest bulletins on

garden pests and expected weather conditions in your area.

All you need is an Internet account and a sizeable amount of patience. There's a world of information available on the Internet for home gardeners and professional farmers alike. And most of it is free for the taking.

Just why gardening is one of the most popular topics on the Internet is something of a mystery. When you're staring at a computer screen eight hours a day, when do you find time to go grub

in the dirt? Or vice versa? Nevertheless, gardening sites abound on the 'net.

One of the best places to start is The Virtual Garden, a commercial site sponsored by media giant Time-Warner Inc. You can access it at <http://pathfinder.com>. When you connect, just follow the road signs until you find The Virtual Garden. Along the way, you can browse through Southern Living and a host of other publications.

At The Virtual Garden, you can access a complete gardening encyclopedia, plant index and a projects site where you can download plans for a variety of home and garden projects. Many of the files at this site are in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format, so you'll need the Acrobat Reader in order to view them. Fortunately, you can download it directly from the site, and it's free.

The Garden Gate, address <http://www.prairienet.org/ag/garden/>, offers links to many other gardening sites plus reviews of gardening software and some gardening shareware programs that you can download. For people who like browsing through seed catalogs on a snowy winter night, there are sites for them, too.

Burpee, one of the oldest companies around, has a site at <http://garden.burpee.com/>. You can check out their latest offerings, or order a printed copy of their catalog while on line.

Stokes, another veteran seed company, has a site at <http://www.stokestropicals.com/>. As the address implies, it deals with tropical plants only. (For the experienced net surfer, this site is Netscape 2.0 enhanced and uses frames. It's sharp. And Stokes is apparently planning some other sites.)

The Gourmet Gardener, <http://www.metrobbs.com/tgg/index.htm>, offers an on-line catalog of gourmet herbs and vegetables plus recipes and tips on cooking without oil or salt.

There's more, of course. News groups, e-mail newsletters, bulletin boards. And who knows? With companies like Netscape and Microsoft announcing new developments almost daily, before long you may be able to take a virtual tour of the botanic gardens in Prague and smell the roses, too.



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