



Quirky is the new chi-chi!

How to have a Fabby Garden... Part III



In 2007's catalog we went over the benefit of good, well draining soil and how important it is to add compost several times a year. In last year's catalog, I talked about how just showing up every day in your little patch of the planet

leads to an ever-improving garden and attitudinal positivity!

Now for this year, let's talk some more about how we see our gardening efforts. If you garden at all – well hooray for you! As we move more and more into what we hippies used to call "future shock" – our ever-changing, techno-centered, rather mediated living experience – isn't it great that there are so many of us who still enjoy getting our hands dirty, smelling the earth and putting in a good day of work out of doors? Even if you have three potted plants on your high-rise patio – good for you! Pat yourself on the back! Keep up the good work and ... don't believe the hype!

Do you fret that your garden doesn't live up to your expectations? Do you ever feel disheartened that your backyard doesn't look like the professional photographs you see in gardening books and magazines and even those gardens you see on garden tours? I ask you, how much time, energy and money would you put into your place if you knew Martha Stewart, Inc. was gonna show up with cameras next Summer? Hee-hee! I bet you would quit your job and send the kids to the relatives while you went OC over the perfect color of crushed gravel to install between your très fashionable new cutting gardens. And while you were at it, you'd probably go on a diet and start considering Botox, too!

Owners of those magazine-y gardens often have a team of designers and workers to plant, clean, prune, weed, construct and maybe find exquisite pieces of cutting-edge garden art just before the photographers show up. Really! Look closely the next time you pine over that enviable "picture perfect" garden. Can

you see that those perennials were just planted? Nice neat mulch around each plant is a giveaway. Or how about those blooming annuals that were just bought and planted yesterday to fill in some of the blank spots between the perennials? Notice how there's very little intermingling of stems and branches between plants as happens in your garden. That's because many of these plantings are brand new! And gardens, of course, are not static, they are in a constant state of change. Try to imagine this garden in six months after the photographers leave. What will it look like? What will those perfectly shaped balls of lavender look like when the crew leaves and there's nobody there to trim them?

I even stopped going on garden tours years ago. There was just too much landscaper-designed, newly planted sameness, especially in their use of plants. It was hard to learn anything new or delight in the garden owner's ideas or personality. And even when you look at the garden photos in *this* catalog – do know that what you don't see is what *I don't want you to see* – like that big empty space in my perennial display bed where last year's gopher family enjoyed their last supper! My gardens are rarely ever "magazine perfect" but they are certainly pretty and make me very happy.

Which is all to say that cosmetic magazine perfection doesn't really exist and if it did, it would be a horrible bore lacking in serendipity, charm, quirkiness and personal accomplishment. Real "perfection" is found in the experience of being in the garden, the joy of the perfect color or texture combo, the hummingbird who comes to make a nest in your favorite Fuchsia, that perfect Spring day when everything you've planted and composted looks so fresh and green and full of promise. The feeling of your own sense of beauty expressed.

Besides, striving, learning, hoping and sharing are what us gardeners do best. Next year will always be better. And since each year we strive and learn and share a little more, it always is, of course!

Annie



Re-purpose your old appliances!



Dang! He was so cute when he was a baby!



One way to fill a bare spot!



Overplanting is fun!