



Confident Connie's garden will be *fabulous* because she always uses compost!



Container gardens use up all the available nutrients rather quickly. Treat them to a 1" layer of compost twice a year.

How to have a Fabby



When visitors descend on our nursery in May and are so taken by our display gardens in peak Spring-time bloom, what I so often hear is: "Please help me! I need every plant in this garden right now so I can go straight home and do the same thing!"

Of course, I feel flattered by her exuberant gardener's heart, but what I really want to say is "Whoa! Hold up there Sparky!"

I want you to be happy and truly enjoy a wonderful home garden but there are some important things I want you to know before you stuff your car full of booty and zoom off into the sunset there.

Those lovely California native annuals? Well, I plant them in February or at the latest March. They take about 45-60 days to bloom, happy to have the chance to put down big happy roots and grow lush foliage during the rainy, cool weather. That way they'll reach their largest and most bloomiferous size to create an amazing show.

And those 3' tall Papavers you're drooling over? They were planted in December or January. Verbascums, Hollyhocks, Columbines and Canterbury Bells went in last Fall. Each plant has its own schedule and if you plant them all right now, they will be individually very pretty but won't all bloom at the same time.

We coastal folks gardening in magical USDA growing zones 9b and 10 are very fortunate, enjoying Spring-like weather almost year around! We can plant many "hardy annuals" – including California wildflowers – just about any time. But if you live inland – say Bakersfield – and you're gonna be blasted with 100 degree temps in June, those little Spring blooming native annuals you planted in May aren't gonna look so super great.

"Oh, that's okay!" says our adorable starry-eyed gardener. "I'll just plant them in part shade!" And off she goes to plant her California dream garden leaving me with visions of crispy-crunchy "Baby Blue Eyes" dancing in my head. Well, they will at least bloom and self-sow next Spring. And the perennials will be fine.

One of the most important parts of creating the most fabby bloom-at-the-same-time garden is to **plant ahead of the season you want your garden to bloom**. Plant your Spring garden early, when it's still raining and you'll enjoy a big bonus: *you won't have to worry about watering.*

Garden...

Part V

Now dear gardeners, if you haven't read our previous catalogs, let's review our most important gardening tips.

- **Always first and foremost is your soil.** When I'm driving around town I can't help but notice gardens. Often I see totally terrific plants in someone's front yard malingering in sadly compacted clay soil. *Their poor strangling roots!* They need friable soil in order to push outward and receive oxygen and nutrition. **Happy roots = happy plants = happy you.** Add enough good quality (not box store-cheapy) compost so your soil is at least 1/2 compost to at least 1" deep. Then, at least 2x a year, toss another 1" layer on top, or at least around your plantings. You'll be thrilled by how much your plants perk up. Adding lava rock helps, too, as it improves drainage and promotes root happiness.

- **Plant in May for fabulous Summer bloom.** Again in Summer for a wonderful Fall.

- Easily double a plant's bloom season by pinching off (deadheading) spent flowers.

- **Cut back perennials** after bloom and side dress with a bit of compost for a great second round of bloom.

- Don't forget to plant **vertical accents!** Tall perennials, Hollyhocks and Sunflowers or maybe flowering vines or edible beans on a pyramid trellis. And don't just stick them in the rear of your garden. One or more right up front conjures surprise and invites you to peek around.

- Add Edibles! Last Summer, I added 'Gypsy' peppers (online) to the front of the garden. So nice of form and the showy red fruits are delicious, too! "Alpine Strawberries" (*Fragaria vesca*, online) make dense mounding edging and bear almost year around here along the coast!

- When I try a new plant I've never grown before, I try to buy at least 2 to **double my chance of success.** I plant one in sun or shade (whatever the seller says it needs) and one in 1/2 day sun. If one shrivels, the other may thrive. What if I had planted only one and it died? I might think it was wimpy or not worth growing or feel terrible I killed it. Most importantly, I might have missed out on something extraordinary!

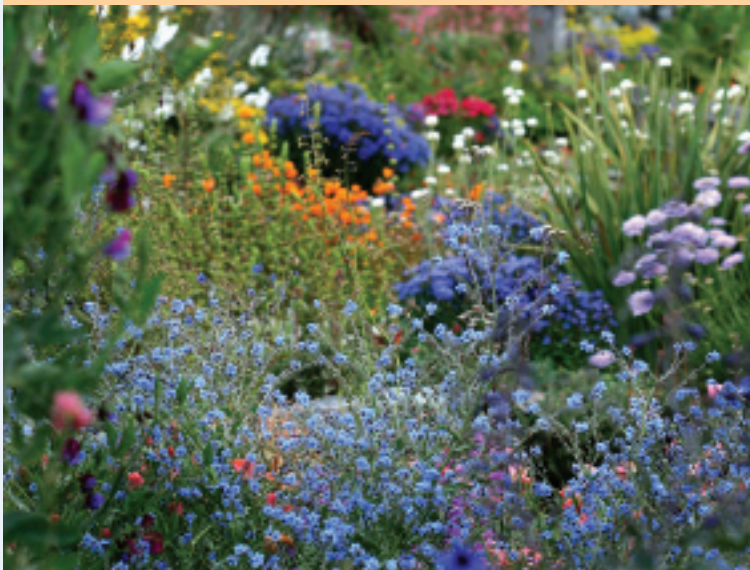
Enjoy your garden as an ongoing adventure you create and participate in. Like a story, it will have episodes, highlights, calamities, thrills, uncertainty and intriguing mysteries. Nurture your story with plenty of patience, curiosity and passion.

And don't let it end when Spring passes!

Annie



Our nursery czarina Kelly Kilpatrick noticed this Zinnia sporting a natural smiley face! Flowers are magical!



..ONWARD GARDEN SOLDIERS!



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