



Create a *Garden Sanctuary*

By Jon George

Cultivating your own garden can do more than produce beautiful flowers - gardening can contribute to both mental and physical health.

Exercise

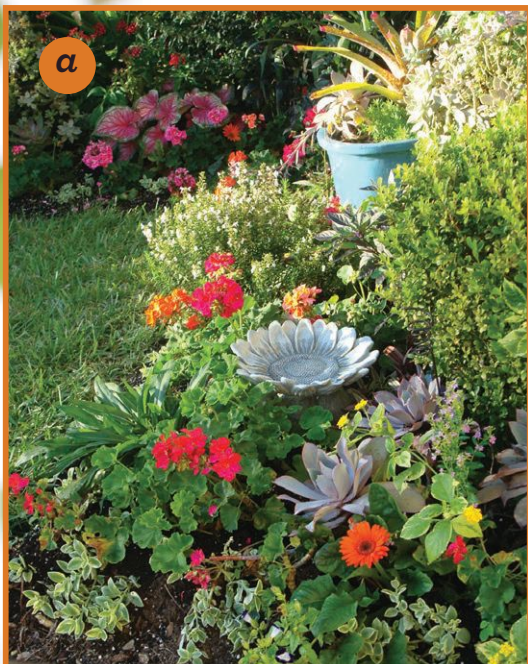
The beautiful fall weather that we experience at this time of the year in North Florida makes me want to get outside and renew some of my own landscape beds. Far from the monotony of some workout routines, gardening provides plenty of fresh air and a change of scenery for those have been feeling cooped up by all the rain we have had this summer. Try setting small goals rather than re-modeling the entire garden in a single weekend. Low level extended exercise is more recommended by health professionals than extreme lifting and bending.

Garden and Reduce Your Stress

Research has shown that interacting with nature can reduce blood pressure, ease muscle tension and breathing and increase electrical activity in our brains. Some doctors in the UK have actually prescribed gardening to combat depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Allow yourself to get outdoors and spend some time with your own garden space. Personally, I find that rummaging through plant catalogs or discovering new plants for the garden is the start of an exciting process. Digging and weeding works up a sweat, but nothing is more satisfying than standing back at the end of the day and having a sense of accomplishment. Creating an interactive landscape space can take a little planning, but a well thought out space lends to a feeling of balance and beauty.

Take time to nurture your landscape and cultivate your garden as a healthy ritual. A little time spent outdoors is good medicine!



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Now is the perfect time for planting your personal garden oasis. Cooler weather means less transplant shock and a chance for plants to develop a larger root system for next spring. Think about your favorite colors and textures. Start saving clippings of garden art and ideas that inspire you. These can be the start of a truly unique garden design.



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Plan for plenty of seating areas to sit and enjoy nature. This quiet Duckpond neighborhood retreat in downtown Gainesville features stone edged walkways and a bench for contemplation. Seasonal mums welcome visitors to the front porch with more views of the garden and a pond below.



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Invite others into your garden space with an arbor or a gateway. Intimate garden spaces are best defined with boundaries that give a sense of privacy and enable you to leave the world behind. This garden gate covered with fragrant Milletia vine offers a tempting glimpse into the pool area beyond.

Seasonal Planting



Butterflies

These winged wonders are now at their peak. Plant nectar plants that bloom in fall like abelia and trailing lantana. Native sunflowers and black-eyed susans will entice them with sunny yellow blossoms. Each species of butterfly has favorite plants they will lay their eggs on. Milkweed, for example, is the preferred host for the Monarch butterfly.

Flowers

Chrysanthemums provide a range of seasonal color options for the fall gardener in Florida and can be planted in the ground after flowering for a repeat show next season.

Now is the time to divide overgrown plants and replant if some, such as daylilies, are getting crowded. A good topdressing of compost will stimulate the roots of any new planting. Think about adding a cut flower garden with dahlias, roses, dianthus, snapdragons and gerbera daisies that all flourish at this time of the year.

Herbs & Vegetables

Florida's mild climate allows gardeners to grow many edible plants for the kitchen garden throughout the fall. Try growing herbs in containers for drainage if you have not had success with them in the ground. Savory Mediterranean herbs such as oregano, thyme and rosemary all can be planted now.

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