



May 2021 bring you joy in the garden

Well, we finally made it to the end of 2020 and some of you may be thinking good riddance. However, if there was a positive that came out of this pandemic year, it was 2020 provided an opportunity for both novice and seasoned gardeners to take advantage of the calming, therapeutic nature of gardening. For many who may have never gardened before, but thought to give it a try, I hope you discovered how fun and relaxing it can be, stressful times or not, and are excited to continue.

Following the hustle of the holidays, the winter months are perfect for planning next year's garden. It's a time to dream, a time for discovery and a time for creativity. I often find myself browsing seed and plant catalogues and websites, reading landscape design books and articles and walking around the yard thinking of what I can do here or there or what plant would look good or grow well in a spot.

Today, most of our gardening resources are at our fingertips, and there are many. Plant and seed producers easily can be found with a click of a button and the vast selection of plants can be overwhelming. Their sites are filled with colorful, interesting and exciting plant species and cultivars from annuals and perennials, to vegetables and fruits, to trees and shrubs, making it easy to find something that meets your needs.

If you like the real thing to hold in your hand, an actual book, there are many publishers that offer great books in all things gardening and related topics. I love buying books and have several shelves filled with garden and landscape books. I really enjoy reading them and always find new inspiration for my own garden.

Plant breeders work hard at providing plants that are interesting, pretty, tough, resistant and productive. Some of those plant breeding programs include Proven Winners®, Garden Debut® and Bailey Innovations®, just to name a few. Another great source for new introductions from breeders is the All-America Selections program, an independent non-profit organization. Each year, they select from trials conducted all over the country the best plants, mostly vegetable and annual ornamental cultivars and varieties, but now include herbaceous perennials; the Perennial Garden Association picks a Perennial Plant of The Year®.

Other good resources are the many plant associations and societies that provide a tremendous amount of gardening information and inspiration, even the results of surveys and gardening trends. Groups like the American Horticultural Society, the National Garden Association and local groups like the Oklahoma Native Plant Society are just a few options. We also have several local botanic gardens, which are great places to receive expert knowledge and find awesome examples of inspiration.

When it comes to choosing plants for the garden, with all the choices we have, it's important to research them carefully to make sure they are suitable to Oklahoma's climate. Plants that thrive in the upper half of the United States may not fare as well in Oklahoma. Fortunately, there are several resources available to help you make the right choice. Publications and programs produced by [Oklahoma State University Extension](#) can offer a great deal of help. Several fact sheets are available to assist with a wide variety of plants. In addition, there is the Oklahoma Proven Plant Selection Program that highlights a tree, shrub, perennial and annual each year. This program has been going strong since 1999, so there are many recommended species from which to choose. Of course, don't forget your industry professionals such as your local garden center and nursery retailers and landscape companies, which offer a wealth of knowledge.

Whatever your experience was this year with gardening, I hope it was a great experience and you will continue. Something as simple as a houseplant or succulent in a container in your home can be quite rewarding. If you have the ability and space to expand your gardening interest to the outdoors, I hope you will give it a try. For me, gardening truly is therapeutic and offers me a way to get away from the stresses around me and is quite relaxing.