

# Garden journals come in many varieties: Ways to plan, note and reflect upon your gardening

By SHEILA GARRETT  
Special to the Record-Eagle

A Chinese proverb states, "A book is a garden you can put in your pocket." The comparison is most obvious in the case of garden journals, which have been around for centuries.

Herbalists in the Middle Ages kept track of the medicinal properties of their plants, which were also used for scents and cooking. At palatial European homes, records of planting were maintained, and in Victorian times, gardeners illustrated their journals with pressed flowers and elegant illustrations.

Some of the best garden journal writers go unpublished. Some have become famous because they were also explorers, describing the flora, fauna and soil of an unknown land, such as Merriweather Lewis in the American West and Joseph Banks in Australia.

A garden journal can be a simple notebook, or a highly personal diary, including the writers' observations and thoughts on life. "Many people start by describing seasonal checkpoints, but

eventually delve deeper, almost into a philosophy about growing as a human being," according to Debbie Garman, publicity manager for Timber Press in Portland, Ore. She recommends the writings of E.A. Bowles and Grant Stewart Thompson as excellent models of what garden journal writing can be.

Along with basic information like the dates of planting, transplanting and harvesting, she suggested the following:

- Record your successes and also your failures. Note what you have learned from both.

- Discuss the climate and the weather. Keep track of the last freeze and the amount of rainfall. Record the names of seed catalogs and other publications that you would like to receive again.

- Remember that this is your journal. Make it your own by including anecdotes and things you would later enjoy reading.

- Many journal keepers like to include a sketch of their garden plots — a rough one, or a more detailed drawing to scale on graph paper. That way, you can easily note where various plants are located. It is important to make a new sketch if you are changing your garden's pattern.

Some gardeners include yearly photographs as well.

Experts advise a durable book, such as a plastic covered or spiral notebook, that can be taken into the garden with you. Look for pages that will not tear if the reader is wearing gloves. Plastic envelopes for seed packets and photos are also practical. These can also be used to contain clippings from garden magazines and newspaper articles.

Some writers record their observations every day. Others write a summary at the end of each week. This is useful to establish a pattern, for example, of what day a particular flower can be expected to bloom. Another method is to keep a page for one specific plant, and record everything about that plant, such as planting and blooming dates, on the same page, adding to it each year.

Carolyn Fought, owner of Omena Cut Flowers, has operated a you-pick flower garden near Omena for five years. She has an acre of perennials in bloom, from which visitors can select their own flowers and make up their own bouquets.

Fought thinks garden journals are a wonderful idea.

"I would love to be able to keep one in-depth," she said. "Like many people, I have some profound thoughts during the day concerning gardening."

As a garden professional, she keeps a guest book for her business. "There are so many wonderful comments" she said.

A recent entry was written by a customer selecting flowers for a close friend who had died. The deceased had been a regular customer at the flower farm, and had confided what flowers she wanted for her funeral.

"I feel she was with me in spirit," the guest wrote.

Although Fought does not have time right now to keep a journal "in a serious way," she gave ideas on what an ideal garden journal should contain.

"There should be room for seed packets, and for comments on what you planted today, the names and a prompting to write down the species," said Fought. "You need to be able to write about what you learn every year. This year, I would say, mix things up in the garden. That way, bugs don't find everything."

Fought recently received a book that she highly recommends. "Green Thoughts, a Writer in the

Garden" by Eleanor Perenyi, published by Modern Library Gardening, is a great gift for the gardener, she said.

"But you do not have to be a gardener to enjoy this," she commented. "It's funny and insightful, on everything from life in general to the best type of tulips."

A book specifically designed for keeping garden records titled "Garden Days Journal" by Karen Strohbeen and Bill Luchsinger, comes in a spiral notebook format, and contains a sample log and journal pages, garden essays and space for the reader to write in a monthly installment. There is also graph paper provided for garden designs.

The Cottage Book Shop of Glen Arbor carries "French Dust" by Richard Goodman and "Deep in the Green" by Anna Raver, both personal reflections to inspire the garden enthusiast.

"The Garden Planner and

Record," by Carolyn Ash allows the gardener to fill in information on what has been planted and planting dates. It is recommended by Cottage Book Shop's Chari Yost Binstadt, a local author and part-time gardener.

"The Vegetable Garden Planning Kit" features a large planning board with colorful, reusable peel and press symbols. The guide can be used to plan a garden before the first crocus blooms. It is an idea that lends itself to a project that the whole family could enjoy. The kit contains a planning grid and frost data.

"It is useful for anyone, but invaluable for beginners," said Susan Price of Traverse City's Horizon Books, who added that a planning kit for flowering perennials will soon be available.

Sheila Garrett is a local freelance writer.

# Safety precautions for inside and outside your home

By JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY  
The Associated Press

Fall and winter mean shorter days, colder weather and less natural light to safely traverse paths outdoors and hallways indoors. The change in seasons also ushers in the need to fire up the furnace and stoke the fireplace or wood stove.

With reduced natural light and furnace and fireplace operation come a host of safety and security hazards, such as nasty falls, home burglaries, increased fire danger and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. There are, however, several simple and inexpensive upgrades that will improve safety and security and, as a bonus, improve comfort and energy efficiency.

A poorly lighted path is an accident waiting to happen — especially when one is burdened with an armful of groceries or packages. Solve the problem by installing landscape lighting. Also called accent and patio lighting, these low-voltage systems are more affordable, energy-efficient and easier to install than ever.

Although elements can be purchased piecemeal, most manufacturers offer a kit that contains everything needed to brighten up the exterior of your home — wire, transformer and fixtures. Besides improving path safety, these systems are a means of lighting dark, bushy areas that could serve as a hide-out for an intruder.

While landscape lighting contributes to the safety and security of a home, it does have its limitations. Where more lighting "horsepower" is needed, such as at the front porch, driveway or a poorly lighted side or rear yard, consider motion-activated lighting. This type of light fixture turns on when a sensor detects motion — a feature that protects against intruders.

When motion-activated lighting first became popular, it was, for the most part, limited to a standard utility spot or floodlight. Today, decorative lantern-style fixtures automatically light up

*If you have a large area that requires much light and you want to accomplish it with a single fixture, a high-pressure sodium or mercury security light will do the trick.*

otherwise dark porches and patios. A motion-activated sensor also can be retrofitted to most existing light fixtures. As with landscape lighting, motion-activated lighting is affordable and easy to install.

If you have a large area that requires much light and you want to accomplish it with a single fixture, a high-pressure sodium or mercury security light will do the trick. These fixtures pack a lighting punch. For example, a 70-watt sodium security light will illuminate more than 8,500 square feet, provide 6,300 lumens of light and last up to 12 times longer than a standard incandescent par floodlight. Add a built-in photo control and the light will automatically turn on at dusk and turn off at dawn with no timers or switches.

Lighting upgrades shouldn't be limited to the exterior. You can improve safety and discourage prowlers by installing motion-activated lighting and timers inside, as well. For example, a motion-activated light switch can come in handy when you travel through a dark hallway with an armful of laundry.

Timers are still another means of improving safety, security and comfort. A standard wall switch can be replaced with a digital timer that will turn interior or exterior lighting off at predetermined times. What's more, this style of switch will allow for random settings that give your home a lived-in look while you are away. A plug-in timer for a table lamp can also create the illusion of an occupied home and keep would-be intruders away. Timers

are inexpensive and easy to install.

Besides providing improved safety and security, motion-activated switches and timers are highly energy efficient — especially if you have youngsters who frequently forget to turn lights off.

*Today, a smoke detector is required in each bedroom and on every level of a home.*

There are other ways of upgrading the safety of your home during fall and winter. Where there's smoke, there's fire — and carbon monoxide. This slightly altered familiar phrase is particularly applicable during fall and winter when home fires increase due to fireplaces and home heating systems being at maximum use. Every home and family should be protected by one or more properly operating smoke detectors and carbon-monoxide detectors. Many years ago building code required only one smoke detector in a home. Today, a smoke detector is required in each bedroom and on every level of a home. A carbon-monoxide detector is not a requirement, though the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that every home with fuel-burning appliances — including fireplaces — be equipped with at least one.

If your home doesn't have smoke detectors, install them. If you have only one, such as in a hallway, install others in all bedrooms and in a central location on every floor of your home. A smoke detector is inexpensive and easy to install. A screwdriver, ladder and 15 minutes is about all you'll need. The same holds true for carbon-monoxide detectors.

You can have a dozen smoke detectors and still end up with little or no protection. Recent studies have revealed that smoke detectors that are 10 years old, or older, have a high rate of failure and should be replaced.

A poorly maintained or dirty smoke detector is useless. Use a vacuum with an upholstery brush to prevent dust and dirt from building up in the mechanism. Test the device's detector and alarm monthly to ensure that they both are working properly.

*Carbon monoxide is the number-one cause of poisoning deaths in America.*

The test button on the detector tests the alarm only. Striking three wooden kitchen matches, blowing them out and allowing the smoke to waft up toward the unit will test the detector. Another means of testing a detector is with an aerosol spray that simulates smoke. Change batteries at least twice annually, and more often, if necessary.

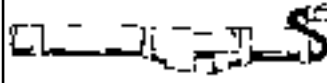
Carbon monoxide is the number-one cause of poisoning deaths in America. A CO detector is as easy or, in some cases, easier to install than a smoke detector. It can be battery operated, hard-wired, permanently installed or can sit on a shelf or tabletop.

You can have the best of both worlds, and maximum protection, by installing a combination smoke and CO alarm. Relatively new to the market, this combo device looks essentially like a smoke detector, but does the job of both. Some models go beyond the standard alarm by offering a voice warning of fire or CO danger.

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