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May 2011

Mixed Borders

In the not-so-distant past, your landscape would have included bedding plants, a perennial garden, a foundation planting or a low-maintenance shrub border. But the latest trend is a mixed border, combining the best of all types of plants to fit the scale of your garden.

Many more plants are available these days, and many types of plants have transformed themselves (or breeders have done it for them) into versatile features with multiple assets.

So how do you go about creating a mixed border for yourself?
We'll start with a sunny border, and do one for shady spots later.



First you need to site it. Choose a spot that you will see and enjoy every day, particularly during the growing season. Your entryway is an excellent place to start, or perhaps a strip along your driveway. You can transform a boring landscape into a colorful array with a bit of editing.



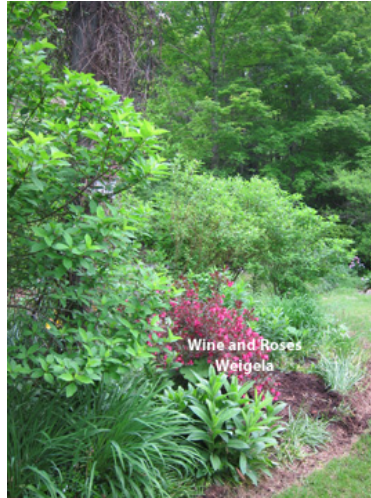
Are you really attached to that overgrown privet hedge? It's not a sin to dig out

If you're really attached to that overgrown privet hedge, it's not a sin to dig out or cut down a plant that no longer fits its niche. Be sure to supplement your soil for maximum results using a nutrient compost and Plantone. Till or mix it in as deep as you can get it.

If your mixed border is seen and enjoyed year 'round it should include evergreens or plants that display winter color in. Evergreens are wonderful, but they need to fit properly in your space. Evergreens grow more slowly than other plants and most are susceptible to deer damage, especially in the winter.

Boxwoods or any of the spruce family are the most deer-resistant. For other winter color, the Proven Winner Cornus Arctic Fire displays red-hot branches all winter long – awesome against snow.

When planning a year 'round mixed border it's more important to consider foliage color than flower color. Foliage provides color for months at a time, often changing as the season progresses.



Flowering shrubs are the workhorses of the mixed border, and there are many great choices.

Spireas provide a wonderful lime-green color and range in size from 6 inches to 8 feet.

Deer turn up their noses at them, leaving undisturbed beauty from early spring until late fall.

Red foliage can be added with Wine and Roses Weigela or a smaller version in Weigela Fine Wine.

The pendulous Nine Bark Summer Wine is a favorite if you have enough room.
(Someone was drinking a lot of wine when they came up with these names ...)

Unsurpassed for its ruby leaves is the smoke bush Cotinus Royal Purple.

The best blue-foliage shrub is Fothergilla Blue Shadow, with deepening blue foliage that turns red in the cooler fall weather. Well-paced colorful shrubs lighten up a large border.

For long-blooming flowers you can't beat the PG-type Hydrangeas like Lime Light and Pinky Winky. Blooms appear in July and flower heads sometimes last through the winter with colorful alterations through the fall.



Choose sturdy perennials for your mixed borders – nothing too dainty. In early spring

the hellebores, such as Lenten rose, are tops for reminding us that flowers will again bloom.
Baptisia and yellow yarrow stand up well in the early and mid-spring.

Look for gaps in your bloom season after placing the shrubs. Shrubs tend to bloom early in the spring, leaving late spring into fall to concentrate on colorful blooming perennials.

Daylilies, Red hot poker, coneflowers and Russian sage are all great choices to fill that void. Don't settle for a dull border. With a bit of forethought and elbow grease you can have an uplifting experience each time you step out the door!

And remember: Flowering shrubs are 20% off every Wednesday!

(More information about the shrubs mentioned can be found at the [Springmeadow Nursery](#) website.)

**We'll be part of the Lewisburg Farmer's Market
on Saturdays from April 16 through July.**

Groundworks Nursery is on the web!

All our plant varieties are listed on our website. Click through to [Groundworks Nursery](#) on the web to see what's available.

Forward to a Friend

Do you know someone who wants to improve and beautify their lawn and garden? Please forward this newsletter!

Look for the next issue of eGleanings in a month or so. We look forward to your visits throughout the growing season.

We're located along the Greenbrier River east of Hinton, WV, on Route 3.

Questions? Comments? Call us at 304.466.4440.

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