

**Starting a garden can be a fun and exciting activity.**

This guide outlines some things to consider when planning a garden.



### Assess the Site

Before “Digging In”, consider the following:

- How many hours of sunlight?
  - Make notes when sun/shade/shadow is on the plot.
- What is the condition of the soil?
  - Take a sample, look at the layers - is it sand/silt/clay?
  - How is the drainage?
  - Dig a test hole, fill with water and time how long it takes to drain.
- Is there a water source on or near the site?
- Are there heavy winds?
- Existing Shrubs or Trees?
- Existing hardscape elements
  - Light poles, walkways, benches, & gazebos, playgrounds, drainage, walls, etc.
- Are there building overhangs, overhead wires, underground utilities (call 811 Dig NY) etc.
- Traffic - pedestrian and/or vehicular
  - Do you need to redirect traffic or work around it?

### Layout the garden

- Choose your design (use attached graph paper to draw out) and then:
  - Mark the garden perimeter using hose, string or a chalk wheel
  - Define the shape: circular, rectangular, kidney, etc.
  - Define the edge with brick, stone, wood or a trench
- Add Site structures
  - Such as benches, birdbaths, gazebos, trellises, sculptures, paths, signs
  - Place structures first then plant around them.
- For an in ground garden:
  - Remove grass or cover with paper and add soil
  - Amend the soil -- add compost.
- For a raised planter:
  - Add gravel prior to soil in garden for proper drainage
  - Fill with at least 10” of a mix of topsoil and organic matter

**Select Plants** (refer to the Renaissance Collection or contact a local garden center for ideas and inspiration)

- Choose appropriate species for location (sun, shade, zone 4/5)
- Anticipate four season use.
- Choose flowering plants for bloom sequence, colors, variety and diversity
- Create seasonal interest by choosing plants with unusual foliage, interesting bark, winter interest, plant spring blooming bulbs, etc.
- Remember plants grow - anticipate mature growth
- Use native species and non-invasive plants
- Buy Local! Refer to the Merchant Discount Participant directory

### **Arrange Plants**

- Place potted plants in desired location to visualize garden design
- Consider contours, slopes & berms
- Consider height of mature plants
- Create depth. Tallest in rear, annuals in front and on edges
- Groupings of same plants, masses make a bigger impact
- Avoid planting in drip lines of roofs, trees, etc.

### **Plant Your Garden**

- Dig the hole a little deeper and wider than the plant pot.
- Water and remove plants from pots right before planting.
- If roots are dense and growing together - tickle the roots to tease them apart.
- Add soil amendments (compost or composted manure)
- Bury the plant to the depth it was growing in the pot. Too deep and the stem will rot; too high and the roots will dry out.
- Shape topsoil in a ring around the plant to form a well that can hold rain and additional irrigation water.
- Water plants after planting. Remember to water deeply once a week.

**Maintaining Your Garden** - Prepare a maintenance schedule. Who will water, prune, mulch?

- Water
  - Plants require at least 1” of water a week; buy a rain gauge.
  - Early morning is best – avoid midday watering
  - Water the roots, not the foliage (hose to ground).
  - Drip/soaker hoses, sprinkler system, water trucks help.
- Mulch
  - Sources of wood chips: Refer to the Merchant Discount Participant directory
  - Add mulch to help retain moisture and reduce weeds.
  - Avoid direct contact with plant stems and tree trunks to reduce pests and rot.
- Weeds & Flowers
  - Remove weeds as soon as you see them. Smaller weeds are easier to pull than larger ones.
  - Deadhead flowers to keep them blooming. With most flowers, the more you prune spent blossoms, the more they will bloom!
  - Stake and support taller plants.

1 square = \_\_\_\_\_ feet

Start your plan

