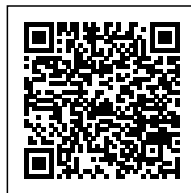




THE 2021 DEFINITION OF GARDENING??

Posted on February 26, 2021 by Ken Lain - Watters Garden Center



Gardening ebbs and flows as a cultural topic. Since last year plants, gardens, natural and organic are part of our vocabulary. The wave is so strong you now find natural words like organic in ads for hard seltzer between downs during the Super Bowl. Why the resurgence of gardening, and what does it all mean???

To really understand and appreciate both the question and the many possible answers, let's do some exploring.

Webster says, "A garden is a plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers, or vegetables are cultivated." Foundationally, this is a good start, but let's dig deeper.

The Wikipedia definition, "A garden is a planned space, usually outdoors, set aside for the display, cultivation, or enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature, as an ideal setting for social or solitary human life. The single feature identifying even the wildest garden is 'control.' The garden can incorporate both natural and man-made materials." This is better, but I've read better definitions that bring it closer to Prescott.

Mario Owens is a fellow garden writer that stimulated the question, "A garden is a vast number of free outdoor restaurants operated by charity-minded amateurs to provide healthful, balanced meals to insects, birds, and animals." I like that Mario adds the idea of drawing more than plants close.

In Japan, everyone gardens. Gardens can be the size of a casserole dish, a patio railing, community gardens to full-on palace gardens. The Chinese have a proverb that says, "If you would be happy for a week, take a wife; if you would be happy for a month, kill your pig; if you would be happy for a lifetime, plant a garden" It's not poetry, but the idea of gardening is drawing close.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines the idea as, "Gardening is the laying out and care of a plot of ground devoted partially or wholly to the growing of plants such as flowers, herbs, or vegetables. Gardening can be considered both an art, concerned with arranging plants harmoniously in their surroundings, and as a science, encompassing the principles and techniques of plant cultivation."

Poetry simplifies the idea in rolling words that seem to sing. Alfred Austin, English Poet Laureate in 1894, wrote, "The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden feeds both body and soul. Gardeners cultivate philosophies that apply to life. Show me your garden, and I shall tell you what you are."

Gardening is positivity; both the noun 'Garden' and the verb 'Gardening' lift your spirits. The spring planting season begins next week. Plant a little sunshine of your own.

The idea is expanded in next week's column, but some garden advice needs to be shared. One of my favorite early spring perennials is

Heuchera. Your grandparents amply named this cherry garden flower 'Coral Bells.' Here's the technical definition.

Coral bells (Heuchera) has witnessed a breakthrough in Heuchera breeding! It's a traditional foliage plant with many more colors to grow than your grandmother could even imagine. Their leaves are rounded, lobed, hairy, and evergreen—even when covered in snow. Cream-colored flowers appear in midsummer, although it is grown more for its fantastic foliage. The compact habit is perfect for containers or as edging. Bell-shaped flowers on tall stems attract hummingbirds and make graceful cut flowers. Besides traditional green-leaved coral bells, new Heuchera varieties have leaves in shades of purple, rose, lime green, gold, with variegation in between.

Varieties of Heuchera

#1 *Heuchera* **Autumn Leaves** changes color through the seasons, from red to caramel to ruby.

#2 *Heuchera* **Chocolate Ruffles** has ruffled leaves with rich chocolate color on the top and deep burgundy on the bottom.

#3 *Heuchera* **Green Spice** has large green leaves veined in maroon and is very hardy.

#4 *Heuchera* **Marmalade** has frilly leaves in shades from umber to deep sienna.

#5 *Heuchera* **Tiramisu** has chartreuse leaves, tinged with red. It changes in color throughout the season.

The second week in March 1962, Harold Watters opened the first garden center in Northern Arizona. 59 years later, we still celebrate the grand opening with a Spring Open House. Consider this a personal invitation to join the celebration March 12-14. We start at 3 pm Friday with a happy hour, only with plants. Saturday the 13th local gardeners can talk directly with our growers fresh from the fields. Sunday, Lisa and I host our weekly radio show, then spend the rest of the day sharing local garden secrets. Join us for the start of the spring planting season.

Until next week, I'll be helping locals refine their garden skills here at Watters Garden Center.