

Gardening without Breaking the Bank

So! You want a beautiful garden but fear it is too costly? Not so. Try these ideas. You can accomplish a lot with a small pocketbook and some hard work, ingenuity and moxie.

A little research and planning can save a lot of \$\$

- **Drive around your neighborhood and see what grows well in your area.**
- **Do research in magazines, books or on the Internet.**
- **Attend garden shows and tours to help you choose favorite plants and gather ideas.**
- **Consult with the experts for free. County extension agents, nursery staff, or gardening friends offer free advice that can save you from costly mistakes.**
- **Observe your yard at different times of the day. See how much sun each part gets. Keep it in mind when**

If the label says...	Then it needs...
Sun	At least six to eight full hours of direct sun per day.
Partial sun/ partial shade	Three to six hours of direct sun per day, preferably in the morning and early afternoon. Or a full day of dappled sun.
Shade	Less than three hours of direct sun each day, with filtered sunlight during the rest of the day. Full shade does not mean a complete absence of sun.

- **After gathering needed information, sketch out a design and decided how much you are able to spend and then create a multi-year landscape plan. Start small to keep from getting discouraged and add on in phases. Make a list of priorities and plan purchases based on your list.**

Start with trees and shrubs, the “bones” of the garden

- **Buy smaller sized trees (5 gallon) and shrubs (1 gallon) since they are cheaper and transplant much better than larger ones. They will catch up and often outgrow the larger plant in a few years.**
- **Don't over plant. Consider the mature size (spread) of each plant so you don't spend extra money buying plants that will need to be moved when they outgrow the space.**
- **Consider trees and shrubs that naturally do well in our area.**
- **Do the planting yourself.**
- **Save your receipts. Many trees and shrubs have a one or two year guarantee.**

Free or low cost plants

- **Buy younger plants, buy common plants.**
- **Buy smaller sized (younger) perennials. They will easily catch up in size within two to three years. It is possible a gallon size perennial can be divided into two or three plants that would be cheaper.**
- **Use common stock. New varieties cost more and are often unproven.**

Bargains

- Use nurseries for special plants and must haves. Otherwise, find cheaper prices at discount chains, home improvement chains, and garden centers at local hardware stores. Tip: Find out from the garden staff which day new plants arrive from the growers each week. Shop those days! The plants are at their healthiest.
- Bargain with salespeople for plants that are less than perfect. But be sure the plants are not diseased and they are plants you can use.
- Check farmers markets for bargains and sales.
- Mix annuals into your garden plan. They are cheaper than perennials and provide color all summer. Comparison shop for annuals, buying more (a flat) may cost less money than many separate plants.

After season bargains

- Shop the sales. Perennials, trees and shrubs can be planted in the fall when garden centers are closing out their plants. You can find good buys on annuals in June after the spring rush.
- Again, bargain with salespeople at the end of the season.

Family and friends

- Let family, friends and neighbors know you are starting a garden. They will probably be glad to share extra plants or seed. Admiring a plant in their garden might get you a start or some seed.
- Make a wish list of plants that friends and family can give you as gifts, or request gift certificates to a garden center.
- Partner with family and friends to receive discounts on larger quantities of items such as bulbs.

Use seeds and seedlings

- Start plants indoors from seeds. A shelf or table in a basement, laundry room, or a spare room can be turned into a greenhouse for starting seeds. You will need some inexpensive shop lights with fluorescent bulbs hung from chains that can be raised or lowered a few inches from the tops of the plants.
 - Connect the lights to a timer set to give the plants 14 to 16 hours of “sun” each day.
 - Temperatures of 65 to 75 degrees in the daytime and 50 to 60 degrees at night are needed.
 - These plants do well from seeds started indoors: marigolds, impatiens, ageratum, coleus, zinnias, salvias, peppers, tomatoes and eggplant.
 - For pots, reuse last year’s trays from plant packs or flats, yogurt containers, milk jugs, egg cartons or other plastic containers. Sterilize them in the dishwasher and poke holes in the bottom for drainage.
- Start plants outdoors from seeds. These plants do well when sown directly in the ground: bachelor buttons, sunflowers, cosmos, nasturtium, morning glories, zinnias, peas, lettuce, corn and beans. Be sure to follow the instructions on the packages as to when and how deep to plant.
- Collect seeds. Save seeds from your best plants. Dry the seeds, then store them in labeled airtight containers in a cool spot.
- Make use of volunteer seedlings. Plants that multiply by dropping seed include bachelor’s buttons, catmint, chives, cleome, cosmos, dill, moss rose, poppies, salvia, sunflowers, columbine, hollyhock and rudbeckia.

Divide and multiply

- Divide large clumps of perennials into several plants. If the plant blooms in the spring, divide it in the fall. If it blooms in the summer or fall, divide it in the spring. Dig the clump and cut it into halves or fourths, depending on the size. Cut the foliage back by half before replanting.
 - Easy-to-divide perennials include catmint, chrysanthemum, cranesbill, daylily, hen and chicks, hosta, iris, monarda, phlox, ornamental grass, rudbeckia, salvia, sedum, Shasta daisy and yarrow.
 - Clematis, columbine, coral bells, delphinium and hollyhocks are perennials that should not be divided.
- Plant bulbs that naturalize such as daffodils.
- Learn to take cuttings from plants. Cuttings are an inexpensive way to propagate a variety of plants like pussy willow, azalea, forsythia, spirea, ivy, geraniums, begonias, coleus, lantana, lavender, vinca, salvia, sweet potato vine, clematis, sage and thyme.

- Cut a 4 to 6-inch piece of stem with several leaves and remove the bottom leaves.
- Place the stem in a pot of moist perlite or vermiculite.
- Cover the pot with a plastic bag to keep it moist and place it in a sunny spot.
- For more detailed directions for rooting cuttings, see “Home Propagation of Houseplants” (Web location on last page).

Plant rescue

- Save dahlia, canna and elephant ear tubers from year to year by digging, drying, and storing during the winter.
- Many times construction sites throw away established trees and bushes when they renovate. Ask if you can dig them up and give them a new home.
- Many businesses use hardy mums for landscaping in the fall and then throw them away. Ask if you can have the plants when they are ready to be tossed.

Lastly, cheaper may not always be better. Specialty nurseries may offer expert advice and guarantees that are helpful.

Smart choices save money

- Read plant labels and note hardiness, light and watering requirements.
- Choose perennials that are hardy enough to survive in our cold winters and hot summers.
- Grow native plants—plants that naturally occur and grow in Kansas—to save money on watering.

Free or low cost compost and mulch

- Some cities offer free compost or mulch to its residents (especially after an ice storm).
- Ask local tree-trimming companies if they have a supply of wood chips they are willing to give away.
- Check the local utility company for free mulch.
- Buy bulk compost or mulch from local companies. Haul it yourself and save even more money.
- Use the recyclable portions of newspapers for mulch. Place about 10 sheets of newspaper on the ground, soak them with water, and then cover with a thin layer of soil or other mulch.
- For depth, use the cheapest mulch you can find. Then top dress with a more attractive mulch.
- Purchase broken bags of mulch that are often available for half price. (Take along some tape.)
- Search out alternative sources. A farm store probably sells a bale of straw for less than a garden center.

Create your own compost and compost bins

Compost is a mixture of soil and decayed organic matter that reduces watering costs, prevents erosion and improves garden soil.

- Organic matter is all around us and it is free. All of these can be composted: shredded newspaper, manure, straw, fall leaves, grass clippings, potato peelings, coffee grounds, tea bags, fruit and vegetable scraps, garden refuse and weeds (no seeds).
- Local farms or stables may offer free manure.
- You don't need a bin to make compost, just an out of the way corner of your yard. However, a bin will keep the waste contained and make it easier to turn the compost. You may be able to find free pallets (skids) at a business and use three to five of them to construct a bin. Other inexpensive materials for compost bins are cinder blocks and 4-foot high wire fencing.

Free or low cost garden accessories



- **Old is good.** Look in your own garage and basement for items that could be re-purposed as garden ornaments or planters. Good candidates are an old wooden chair or bench, an old wheel barrow, old wagons, old boots and old baskets.
- **Create your own garden art.** Look for ideas in magazines or gardening books for making stepping stones, painted rocks, wind chimes, bird houses or bird baths.
- **Watch ad sites on the Web or classified ads in the newspaper** for needed materials or outdoor furniture.
- **Check out garage sales, estate sales, auctions, and flea markets** for tools, yard art, containers and outdoor furniture.
- **Check out architectural salvage yards** for materials to use for a trellis, arbor or pergola.
- **Look for chipped clay or ceramic pots** and ask for a discount. Then hide the defect with a plant or a little paint.
- **Paint large, cheaper plastic pots** to resemble seasoned clay pots.
- **Turn broken mini-blind slats into plant labels.** Cut them into 8-inch lengths with a point at one end and label with permanent markers.
- **Search scrap piles at construction and demolition sites for materials.** (Ask permission first.) You can find scrap wood, rocks and broken tiles that can be used for projects, borders, paths or stepping stones.



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