

Gardening—more of the good chores, less of the bad

Most gardeners like spending time outdoors and prefer garden chores to indoor ones. But even the most hardcore gardeners have yard chores they'd prefer not to do. What are the worst chores, and which ones are the most enjoyable? An informal survey revealed quite a bit of consensus. Maybe, with a little forethought, we can spend more time doing the things we enjoy and less on the chores we dislike.

Least Pleasurable Garden Chores

Weeding tops the list of the most-hated garden chores, or at least makes it into everyone's Top 10. It's hard to do effectively and it demands attention not to the beauty of the garden but to the things that threaten it.

Dealing with pests and diseases isn't something we enjoy either. But with beneficial insects outnumbering true pests by something like 97 percent, they may require less time and energy than we give them.

Lawn chores like mowing, raking, edging and aerating are "noisy" tasks that a lot of gardeners would prefer to avoid. Caring for equipment—cleaning, sharpening and fixing—isn't a preferred task either.

Not surprisingly, we don't enjoy jobs beyond our level of expertise. How many gardeners test their soil? Not a lot of us. And some tasks like composting are often presented as a complex system and, as a result, are avoided. But simple things like putting lawn and leaf waste in out-of-the-way places where it can gradually break down on its own, and digging holes for kitchen waste where moisture and worms speed up the process doesn't take a lot more effort than filling garbage cans and lawn waste bags... and it improves the soil while also reducing landfill.

Most Enjoyable Garden Chores

There are unifying factors for the chores gardeners enjoy. They tend to be tasks that are less repetitive, less physically demanding, done by hand rather than with power tools and allow for creativity. Timing makes a huge difference as well—a beautiful day makes any chore more enjoyable, and not feeling rushed helps too.

Designing and deciding what to plant and then gathering the plants is highly pleasurable for most gardeners, a chance to think about color, texture and different seasons. It takes place before the harsh realities of wind, heat and hard work dampen our spirits. And doing the actual planting is enjoyable for most gardeners, too.

Deadheading is a task many gardeners enjoy. Unlike weeding, it focusses on successes, giving us a chance to pay attention to passing beauty.

Laying stone walls or pathways is hard physical work but it can make a dramatic and almost immediate difference. Pruning woody plants and cutting back ornamental grasses is somewhat dependent on timing; if these chores are done in late spring when everything needs attention all at once, they add to the duties. During winter months, though, they give gardeners a chance to be outdoors and productive.

Making a few little changes may help you enjoy gardening more—spacing plants closely to avoid weeding; pruning on a mild winter day rather than a rushed spring day; and planting shrubs in patches of the lawn that are difficult to mow.

