

# A Gardener's Journal

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

*“Gardening gives one back a sense of proportion about everything except itself. What a relief it was to me when I read that Vita Sackville-West kept a pile of metal labels in a shack at Sissinghurst as proof of all the experiments that had failed! I had, until then, been ashamed of how much waste there was even in my unpretentious garden here.”*

*May Sarton*

**What do you want to remember?**



Why do gardeners keep journals? For the same reasons people keep other kinds of journals—recordkeeping, reminder, reflection and, if we're to be fully honest, maybe therapy and confession. Where else can you admit you killed your third balloonflower because it's slow coming up and you planted something over it (and yes, three times).

The great thing about a journal is that there are no rules, particularly if it's for your eyes only. You can keep track of as much or as little as you want. Though there are a lot of things that could be contained in it, some of the simplest and most helpful things to take note of are the plants you have and the plants you want to get.

Throughout the year, we're likely to see dozens of plants in other people's gardens that we want in our own. Without that list of “gotta-get” plants, it's easy to walk into nurseries in the spring and simply buy what looks good right then, which means we often neglect plants for late summer, fall and winter.

## What to Record

- Plants you currently have in your garden.
- When you purchased or planted them and where they were planted.
- The cost—if you want to keep track of how much you spend (many of us don't).
- Weather, such as frost dates, rainfall, temperatures.
- Date of harvest or bloom.
- Photographs.
- Pressed specimens.
- Plants you want for future years.

## Types of Journals

- A shoebox may well qualify as a journal, especially if it contains plant labels, seed packets, plant catalogs or handouts from talks.
- A simple list of plants purchased and/or plants desired, maybe with website links.
- Garden planner with layouts and photos from your garden or from magazines.
- Personal diary with entries posted as desired.
- Photo album showing the garden at various stages.
- A gardening database with specially designed software for record management.
- For the more ambitious, a garden blog that can be shared with others. There are some excellent regional ones full of great information that also provide an online community of people with similar interests.

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