

## You and Your Garden: A Brief Self-Assessment

I most enjoy working in this part of my garden:

I spend the most time working in this part of my garden:

The garden job I most often procrastinate on is:

My three favorite plants in my garden are (think about what makes them so):

What's your TU (Tolerance for Untidiness) in your garden? Show your own comfort level with an X on the line:

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Neat as a pin

Wild and weedy

**Below are jobs in the garden. Put a star by three you enjoy doing. Cross out three you need to do but especially don't enjoy or find physically challenging.**

Weeding

Watering with hoses

Fixing/adjusting the irrigation system

Propagating with seeds or cuttings

Managing a compost pile

Annual pruning of shrubs and trees

Occasional pruning to shape shrubs and trees

Deadheading flowering plants

Removing spent foliage and seedpods

Raking and removing leaves

Cleaning up dropped debris (flowers, fruit, seedpods, twigs, etc.)

Staking plants

Planting and transplanting

Digging and dividing perennials

Mowing or edging the lawn

Tending the lawn (fertilizer, weeds, thatch, etc.)

Spreading mulch and/or compost

Applying fertilizer

Managing pest control

Harvesting produce or cut flowers

Other jobs:

## **Smart Gardening Strategies for Less Work**

Kathy Clark, Insights into Gardening 2023

“If you keep doing what you’ve always done, you will keep getting what you’ve always got.”

### **Strategies to make gardening easier:**

#### **Get tired more easily?**

- ~ When possible, sit while you work.
- ~ Use kneeling supports and rising assists.
- ~ Choose long-handled tools.
- ~ Have places to sit in each area of the garden.
- ~ Don’t push it. Back off the day’s goal if needed.
- ~ Make snacks and water bottles easily available.
- ~ Work in the cool of the morning.

#### **Too much walking back and forth?**

- ~ Think through the day’s project and gather tools before starting.
- ~ Have a light-weight tool caddy or bucket to take along.
- ~ Place debris containers throughout the garden. Empty them occasionally.
- ~ Create a satellite tool site out in the garden.

#### **Not as strong as you were?**

- ~ Keep tools sharp.
- ~ Fill trugs only halfway.
- ~ Use wheels! A 2-wheel barrow, dolly, or wagon moves material and pots.
- ~ Hire help; check with schools for horticulture students. Or garden with a buddy.
- ~ Ask for garden help as gifts.
- ~ Use lightweight power tools.

### **Design for ease:**

#### **Make moving around the garden safe and easy.**

- ~ Use ramps instead of stairs on sloping ground.
- ~ Keep gates working smoothly.
- ~ Gates and paths need to be wide enough to accommodate wagons, mowers, and wheelbarrows.
- ~ Central paths should be smooth and 4-6’ wide.
- ~ Use non-slip steppingstones to access wide beds.

#### **Create garden beds that minimize effort:**

- ~ Put plants that need deadheading near a path for easy access.
- ~ Group plants that need similar care: deadheading, trimming, watering.
- ~ Avoid “divas”—the plant in a bed that demands more water, more trimming, more work than the others.
- ~ Bigger beds need less work—more room to grow means less frequent control measures.
- ~ Plant beds in sweeps, not dotted with many different plants that require diverse care.
- ~ Use shrubs more than perennials. Consider dwarf cultivars if space is limited and to reduce pruning needs.
- ~ Place bulbs back far enough that foreground plants will hide the fading foliage.
- ~ Combine groundcovers (Ajuga, Epimedium, Lilyturf, Carex, Waldsteinia) with sturdy perennials or shrubs.

#### **Designing with potted plants:**

- ~ Group multiple pots with similar needs.
- ~ Put plants with similar needs within a pot.
- ~ Use bigger pots for less frequent watering.
- ~ Glazed and plastic pots need less watering than terra cotta ones.
- ~ Use straight-sided or flared pots for easier repotting. Avoid narrowed openings.

## Arthritis-related sites (You don't need to have arthritis to find the tips helpful.)

<https://www.howdoesyourgardenmow.com/handy-gardening-tools/>

<https://www.arthritissupplies.com/arthritis-gardening-tools.html>

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/top-arthritis-friendly-garden-tools-189399>

<http://blog.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/helpful-garden-tools/>

<https://rheumatoidarthritisliving.com/ergonomic-garden-hand-tools/>

## Seven Plant Queries to Minimize Garden Work

- ☐ Does it fit in with my garden's characteristics?
- ☐ What's its staying power?
- ☐ Does it require deadheading to keep blooming?
- ☐ Will it need staking or training or regular pruning?
- ☐ How often does it need dividing to do well?
- ☐ Is it a magnet for trouble?
- ☐ What are its potential bad behaviors?

### What's the plant's staying power?

#### Shorter-lived

Hyacinth  
Penstemon  
Columbine  
Delphinium  
Lobelia  
Dianthus  
Shasta daisy  
Scabiosa  
Coreopsis  
Baby's breath  
Painted daisy  
Iceland poppy  
Gaillardia  
Foxglove  
New cultivars?

#### Long-lived

Baptisia  
Peony  
Hosta  
Bleeding heart  
Hellebore  
Daylily  
Butterfly weed  
Liatris  
Pulmonaria  
Goat's beard  
Hardy geranium  
Iris  
Red hot poker  
Monarda  
Yucca

### How often does it need dividing?

#### Frequent dividing (3-5 years)

Bearded iris  
Creeping phlox  
Dianthus  
Yarrow  
Astilbe  
Speedwell  
Shasta Daisy  
Heuchera  
Rhubarb  
Aster  
Delphinium  
Cornflower  
Echinacea  
Tiarella  
Goldenrod  
Ornamental grass

#### Rarely divided (6+ years)

Anemone	Russian sage
Brunnera	Wild ginger
Balloon flower	
Columbine	
Hardy Geranium	
Heliopsis	
Echinops	
Goat's beard	
Hosta	
Siberian iris	
Jacob's ladder	
Pulmonaria	
Peony	
Epimedium	

### **One Whack Perennials in my garden—a partial list**

Hellebore  
Epilobium  
Epimedium  
Agastache  
Peony  
Shorter asters  
Goldenrod  
Achillae  
Joe Pye weed  
Russian sage  
Lavender  
Tall sedum  
Brunnera  
Echinacea  
Eryngium  
Heuchera  
Kniphofia  
Mayapple

### **Shrubs in my garden that bloom with little pruning—a partial list**

Rhododendron  
Calycanthus  
Viburnum  
Physocarpus  
Carpenteria  
Hebe  
Hydrangea  
Sarcococca  
Ceanothus  
Buddleia  
Daphne  
Mahonia  
Manzanita  
Pieris  
Ribes  
Mexican orange  
Oceanspray  
Yucca

### **Useful resources:**

*Dividing perennials:* <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/dividing-perennials>

### *Plant descriptions:*

Great Plant Picks: <https://www.greatplantpicks.org/>

Plant list specific to the maritime NW, curated by professionals. Includes searchable databases and pre-selected lists for specific needs; includes mature plant size in descriptions.

Missouri Botanical Garden: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>

Plant Finder is an extensive plant database searchable for specific needs with thorough plant descriptions. Includes cultural needs, potential problems, pest resistance, and more.