

Creative ways to an enchanting garden

By Anne Mahle

Enchantment comes from delighting in discovery, of not having the story given to you on a platter, but having it unfold as you turn the page. I want to discover what's in my garden, not have the whole view

given to me at once. I delight in what's around the next corner and what I'll find as I wind my way through.

There are many, many ways to create places of discovery in your garden. Creating curves and turns and visual blocks is one. Another is to concentrate on

the sensory aspect of flowers and vegetables: not only their taste, but also how they feel, look and smell. Finding a plant growing in an unusual place is yet another way to add charm and fascination to an everyday plot. Lastly, the props or containers that you use to accent your plants can give a delightful surprise to someone who looks a little closer.

If you have the luxury of planning a new garden, adding curved pathways and edges is a wonderful way to lead a person through your garden space rather than creating blocks and sharp edges. It's also possible to build curves amongst straight rows to give both visual appeal, but still take advantage of space saving 90-degree angles in raised beds, cold frames and rows of vegetables. One way to do this is to create rectangular raised beds just as you normally would, but place them along a path that is curved. Another is to create curved beds, but have straight rows within the beds.

To create visual attractions and screens, trellises, fences and arbors can be made with newly cut prunings from larger trees. Be sure to use them immediately if you are curving the branches as even after a day the branches stiffen. Most anything that grows in a vine way can be grown upward instead of sprawling out.



Whimsical statues like gnomes can add character to your garden.



Snap peas grown on a trellis or a fence adds needed height and balance to a cottage perennial bed.

ELIZABETH HENKEL PHOTOS

Tomatoes, melons, zucchini, squash, beans, nasturtiums and climbing flowers can all be grown on structures that lead them upward. Old lad-

ders, tee pees made from poles, copper or wooden trellis and arches will support these plants beautifully. Some plants are sturdy enough to form arches on

their own with just a little training. Sunflowers grown on either side of a walkway and then trained to bend as they

flowers are half the size of the traditional sunflowers, their stalks are not as broad and will bend more easily.

Beans work well climbing up poles in a tee pee arrangement under which kids can climb into and play while a parent is working next to them deadheading or weeding. Tomatoes, if grown on a trellis, also will make a great screen to surround a small patio or to simply create interest in your garden.

Sunflowers or other tall flowers also work well to block a person's immediate view of the entire garden. I've also grown corn for this purpose. The harvest from the stalks has been an added

If you have the luxury of planning a new garden, adding curved pathways and edges is a wonderful way to lead a person through your garden space rather than creating blocks and sharp edges.

Some plants are sturdy enough to form arches on

grow tall, can eventually be tied together to create an archway. This technique works better with the smaller hybrid sunflowers. They grow almost as tall, but as their

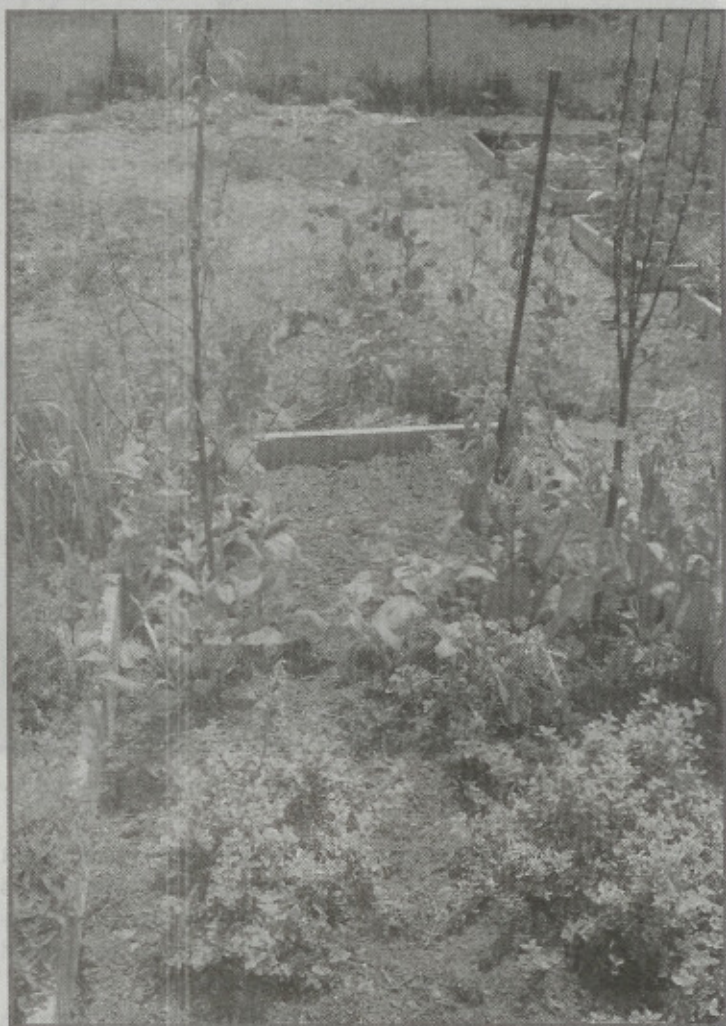
See **GARDEN** page 3

GARDEN from page 2

bonus. Plant them in the front of the garden, at the entrance or in the middle to encourage a winding route.

Our gardens are not only pleasurable for the harvest they bring to our tables, but for their fragrance, touch and visual appeal. Think about all of your senses when you are planning and planting your garden. Where might you best be able to smell the heliotrope or nicotiana when you are taking an evening walk? What about when you are bending closer to pick a weed or a few vegetables — maybe a few basil plants, lemon verbena or dill where you wouldn't ordinarily expect it would be just the thing. Where would you delight in soft petals like lambs ears or ferny ones like fennel, dill and asparagus?

Something fun that the French tend to do a good deal in their gardens is to plant flowers among the herbs and vegetables among the flowers. Think about the beauty of lettuce leaves and find an open spot in the front of your perennial garden. Pansies, nasturtiums, calendula and chamomile are lovely interspersed among rows of vegetables. Cilantro, basil and dill could fill a bare space that an early flowering bulb or perennial has left behind. Corn or peas, tomatoes or beans grown on a trellis could add needed height and balance to a cottage perennial bed. Another idea is to let some of these plants go to seed — lettuce, corn and broccoli all have lovely shapes and tall structures when they bolt and aren't removed to make room for something that will produce. You also then have the added benefit of collecting that seed for next year.



Raised beds can add depth to your garden. Planted in this bed are eunonymous in the foreground, borage in the middle and sweet peas on the fence.

Old garage sale items and other things you might throw out are perfect for garden structures. They are beautiful and aged and you don't care if they start to rot a tiny bit or get rusty — that just adds to the charm. Ladders missing a few rungs could become a trellis for beans or melons. Old boots or shoes become small charming planters tucked in here and there. A tin bucket or watering can with holes in the bottom become a larger planter to place on corners or to act as sentries to your garden. Wooden crates or painted boxes (make sure it's not lead paint), old wooden baskets

losing their bottoms, mismatched window boxes — all can create interesting little containers or supports in your garden.

No matter what you choose, adding three or four of these ideas or some creative ones of your own will give your garden a character and a sense of wonder that will delight you, your children and your guests.

Anne Mahle lives in Rockland with her family and is the author of the cookbook "At Home, At Sea: Recipes from the Maine Windjammer J & E Riggin." Mahle and her husband own and operate the schooner. ♦