

Discover

Green Thumbs and Do-It-Yourself

continued from page B17

Backyard lounge
For those warm nights that you would prefer to enjoy outside, set up a backyard movie lounge to set the mood and enjoy the best of the outdoors with all the comforts of the inside. Prop chaise lounge cushions up against a tree to create comfortable, easy to clean seating. Drape twinkle lights (or old Christmas lights from that box in the basement) around tree branches to set the mood, and stretch a sheet between two trees to create the perfect movie screen. Add in a projector and some popcorn, and you are good to go!

Stargazing bunkbed
If you have an old bunk bed, or know your children will soon outgrow one, don't throw it away. By taking the mattresses off and replacing the springs with planks of wood, you can transform your bunk bed into an outdoor stargazing lounge. Add a pop of color by painting the frame and add functionality with an easy shelf around the edge.

JULY GARDENING TIPS

Annuals, perennials and bulbs

Dead head. Continue to remove dead flowers from your annual plants to keep them blooming.

Compost. If your annual plants have died off, pull them and add to a compost pile, which you can use to fertilize your garden next year.

Replant. You can fill in dead spots by replanting the same area with hardy annuals or perennials such as pansies, calendula or armeria.

Second bloom. Cut faded annuals back by one half of their height, then fertilize them with a liquid 5-10-10 fertilizer to get a second bloom.

Shrubs and trees

Prune. Shrubs that bloom in the summer should be pruned for shape after they have finished flowering by removing dead or diseased branches.

Fertilize. Shrubs like rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias should be fertilized after they have finished flowering.

Improve. Remove developing seed pods from rhododendrons and azaleas to improve next year's bloom. Do not damage next year's buds, which may be just below the pod.

Fruits and Vegetables

Harvest. It's finally time to enjoy your homegrown fruits and vegetables!

Salad crops. Plant out successions of salad crops to continue harvesting throughout the summer. Sow seeds for cool-season crops directly into the garden by mid-July.

Replant. If you have empty areas of the garden, you should replant them now with a fall vegetable crop.

Lawn Care

Brown, not dead. Grasses go dormant in times of drought, but will return to life when it rains. If you are experiencing a water shortage it is possible your lawn may have to go dormant. Raise the cutting height of the mower and avoid using fertilizers in hot, dry weather.

House Plants

Protect. Care for your house plant by moving it to a shady, protected spot outside.

Water. Drier weather means watering and misting your plants more regularly throughout the day.

Feed. You only need one half of the recommended strength of a soluble house plant fertilizer while they are actively growing in the summer.

This, that, and the other thing.

Pull weeds. Stay on top of the weed population, before they have a chance to flower and seed again.

Bird baths. Change the water in bird baths regularly and keep it filled. Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Watch for disease. Watch for insects or disease damage and take steps to control possible problems.

Clark's Island Annual Picnic

Sunday, July 13 from 11:30 - 2 p.m. The annual Clark's Island Picnic takes place at Duxbury Rural and Historical Society's Cedarfield on the east side of the island and is an opportunity for visitors to enjoy the historic surroundings of Cedarfield, the second oldest house on the island. Clark's Island in Plymouth Bay was the spot where the first exploring party from the Mayflower went ashore in 1620. On the morning of the next day they walked to the top of the island where stands an enormous glacial boulder. As it was Sunday, they there celebrated their first Sabbath ashore in the New World. For this reason, the outcropping on Clark's Island is known as Pulpit Rock. To commemorate this event, a sermon or historical presentation reflecting on the history of the location and its meaning to current generations has traditionally been given during the Society's picnic. bring your friends, your family, and a delicious picnic lunch and join the fun!

Getting in touch with nature

Blue River Montessori students utilize rain barrel for gardening



Blue River Montessori student Ayla Stadelmann waters the garden at the school using the water collected in the new rain barrel. The students are learning how to use water that is safer for the plants to grow the garden.

Photo by Ian McCourt

By IAN MCCOURT
CLIPPER INTERN

When it comes to getting an education, the typical environment is a classroom. Motivational posters hang from the walls and pencils can be found strewn across the room, missing from their owners.

The Blue River Montessori School, on Temple Street, has this environment — but it's not limited to just four walls. The children are encouraged to explore outside; it's even a part of the curriculum. On the school's Web site, it's explained: "We subscribe to the natural playscape idea of outdoor play, minimizing the distractions of man-made materials and play structures on play. Rather, we promote imagination and joy in nature through adventurous walks in our woody path, meadow, and gardens."

Sonia Kelly, the lead teacher, explained that the school calls it the indoor/outdoor classroom. Over the years, she had noticed a lack of outdoor education.

"Kids aren't getting a chance to just play and be submersed in nature and solve problems with themselves," she said.

So by building a "woody path," an outdoor play area, a garden and more, kids are able to experience life in a less-structured environment. The kids will spend time reading and writing and learning math indoors and then will make their own discoveries in the yard without the constraints of a building.

"That's what childhood is all about," Kelly said. "It's about getting lost in the woods and building walls and picking up rocks and finding worms."

The latest addition to this outdoor classroom is a rain barrel — aptly titled because it collects rain through a gutter system from the roof. Kelly decided to use this barrel to collect rain water, which then could be used to water the garden — rain water is a much better resource than tap water. According to the Web site HomeGuides, "Tap water contains inorganic ions and fluoride compounds that accumulate in the soil over time and potentially harm plant roots and microorganisms in the soil."

The rain barrel serves as an appealing fixture outside the school, as well as a resource to further improve the garden.

Kelly knew the barrel could serve as more than a tool for the fruits and vegetables growing in her backyard — it serves as a tool for the kids, as well. The kids will use the barrel to water the plants themselves, teaching them about responsibility, sustaining the environment and the pleasure that comes from hard work. It's not about achieving good grades, it's about achieving life skills and self-discovery.

The kids then have the opportunity to eat the foods they grow. They'll have pepper tastings, and sometimes will just be relaxing, eating freshly-picked chives. In fact, every day at Blue River Montessori in the summer, lunch is served with fresh foods from the garden. The remnants are then composted into fresh soil for the garden, and the cycle begins again.



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