

ORGANIZING YOUR YARD IS A SNAP(SHOT) -
CAMERA, SCRAPBOOK CAN BE GARDEN TOOLS TO DEVELOP PLANS

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Our lovely plants faithfully unfold each year, only to fade away come late fall. Gardening is a game of memory. Remember those trips to the garden center picking all the favorites, only to discover there's no room for planting? Keeping an archive of garden notes and photos helps gardeners win the memory game.

Whether she's lying on her belly, or crouching down for the perfect shot, Sharon Meriash, an Aurora resident, volunteers her time shooting orchids and other interesting plants at Denver Botanic Gardens. Meriash is among a team cataloging exactly what's growing in the gardens.

Patrons catching a glimpse of Meriash snapping photos often say, "That's a great idea, I should do that for myself," she says.

Meriash keeps track of what's growing at home, too. Her online archival system is elaborate, but for quick reference she uses a three-ring binder. It is home to handwritten notes, bloom times, and articles she says.

Meriash encourages gardeners to use photos as a planning tool.

"Next year they can plan for more height or more red," says Meriash.

Keeping the color palate interesting with calming purples and stark yellows isn't easy. Photographing the whole garden however, makes it possible, says Meriash.

A collection of snapshots tells the garden's story - whether it's too bare, too full or begging for a swath of color.

The color scheme in Meriash's garden is no accident. Jotting down bloom times helps her keep colors constantly flowing while anticipating those mid- or late-summer vanishing blooms.

"I do like to keep track of when they bloom because it's important to have something blooming at all times," says Meriash.

Staying organized outside

"I've always been the queen of organization," says Kass Johns, a Colorado Springs resident.

Johns lucked out when she happened upon several beautifully decorated scrapbook binders at a local thrift shop. Johns keeps all her garden mementos neatly hidden in those binders.

Johns' binders came with hundreds of sleeves - a place she stores plant tags and plant clippings. A few dividing tabs keep her sun garden separate from her herb garden, and all her other "themed" green spaces.

Johns' yard was featured on a xeriscape tour last year. She says the binders helped jog her memory when onlookers inquired about plants.

Penciled sketches help Johns remember plant locations. "The maps are my guide to what's planted where," she said.

Having it on paper also keeps Johns more efficient in the yard.

"I want to make sure that I don't overplant or dig out something that's coming up later."

Denver resident Dorothy Borland transplants and tweaks her yard to achieve the right look. She says photos helped her see what changes made sense before digging up piles of earth.

Whether more height, variety or color, photos helped Borland pinpoint specific needs.

Growth spikes and winter damage can create an ever-changing garden. If it's difficult to remember what's popping up, you're not alone.

"In the spring, I forget how big it gets," says Borland who opts for a balanced look instead of an overgrown yard.

Borland has a running to-do list in her garden file. Whether she's designing a knot garden or walkway, lists help her stay focused.

Photo tips

Want to add photos of your proudest peonies or interesting heirlooms for the scrapbook? One of John Fielder's favorites is the Colorado columbine.

The Denver nature and landscape photographer says patience helps him snap those prize-winning shots.

"The long stalks, they never hold still," he said. "It's like they're playing hard to get."

In the direct light, Fielder says the best time to photograph is one hour after sunrise, or one hour before sunset.

The color of light is yellow, orange and red during this time and it warms the color of the landscape he says.

When photographing during midday, "white clouds block intense sunlight and reduce contrast," rendering better photos says Fielder.

Caption:

Photo

Caption:

Garden scrapbook. ART PROVIDED BY BETSY LEHNDORFF

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