



Sometimes Gardeners Have to Let Go

Support groups exist for all sorts of addictions and obsessions. But for a gardener who just can't stop bringing home the latest, the greatest, or any other plant calling their name at the local garden center, there is little relief.

If your garden is running out of room for new plants, it's time to get tough. When sentimental attachments to garden favorites must be weighed against the desire to bring home a new introduction, these suggestions may help you decide when it's time to let go.

The first step to garden editing is to check to see if any plants are languishing. Is the plant blooming less than it used to? While this may be the signal to divide, it may also mean the natural end of the plant's life cycle. If you love the plant, and it is an asset to the garden try dividing, but don't replant all the divisions in your own garden. Give some away to friends and neighbors.

Poor performance may also be an indication of the right plant in the wrong place. Move it or lose it!

By nature, some plants are more prone to disease than others. Older varieties of Phlox paniculata and Monarda are mildew magnets. If you love these plants, don't spend the time and money ministering to them each season. Dig them out and replace them with a modern variety that has been bred to be more resistant to disease.



Do the leaves of your hostas become chewed to bits every summer by hungry slugs? There are thick-textured varieties that are much more resistant to slug damage. Replace old standards with exciting new hosta varieties. You'll not only have leaves with less slug damage, but also the beautiful color of the new types.

Your gardens may be suffering from the 'been there, done that' look. Are they filled with plants so often used by everyone they've lost their impact. If your garden falls into this category, it's time to do some editing.



You've proven you can grow these plants successfully; now you're ready to move on to a more sophisticated palette. Give yourself a pat on the back, and celebrate by planting something a bit more unusual.

Look at woody plants with a critical eye, too. If formerly flourishing specimens have thinned or are flowering poorly, they may be suffering from the lack of sun. Have surrounding trees grown larger casting more shade?

Some shrubs transplant easily; others may have outlived their usefulness. Do a little research to determine the best approach with your plant.

Are the mature shrubs in your landscape overgrown and filled with dead wood? If you've inherited poorly maintained shrubs from a previous homeowner, it is usually best to start fresh. Console yourself with the fact that newer varieties are more disease-resistant than their predecessors, and that they have also been improved in form and blooming capabilities. If the shrubs are used for screening, the loss will only be temporary.

Occasionally, even trees must be removed. If that sweet little evergreen has grown into the monster that ate the sidewalk, it's time to either re-route traffic or do something about the evergreen.

An option may be to limb it up – removing several tiers of branches until the tree is no longer an obstacle. This might also create a lovely shaded bed where colorful impatiens can add a punch of color.

Fast growing tree varieties are sometimes chosen by builders and beginning gardeners as a quick fix. These trees may possess less desirable traits in terms of habit and life span. Work to upgrade the quality of woody plants on your property by choosing replacements carefully. Look for plants that are beautiful, durable, and suitable for the site.

It's difficult for gardeners to remove plants from their landscapes, but sometimes that is just the thing to make the garden more beautiful. Take a keen look at your garden and try to make the tough decisions. Or consider starting your own support group!



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