**THE IMPORTANCE of a GARDEN JOURNAL**

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 Have you ever ‘misplaced’ a plant in your garden or stepped on a tender Amaryllis just as it breaks through the ground in early spring? Maybe it is time for you to consider creating a garden journal. There are a number of reasons why record keeping can be beneficial to a gardener. A journal will help you remember where you planted a prized perennial and when to expect its reemergence. If you include pictures of your garden over a span of years, the pictures and the journal will remind you of the annual progress of your garden.

 This combination of photos and notes will capture size, color, and most importantly how invasive the plant becomes in your garden. You will discover which plants are not worth leaving, because, in reality, they did not suit your original plan.

 Oh, yes. Did I mention it’s nice to have a plan? A well-planned garden is one that eventually frees the gardener from tedious physical labor and allows this hobby to become more pleasure than work.

 Garden journals can be home-made, bought from bookstores, created on a computer, and ordered via the Internet. Specific software packages can be purchased for this purpose.

 A garden journal should include:

* A map of your garden.
* Plant orders
* Spring/Fall projects
* Fertilizer Schedule
* Hybridizing Records
* Transplant/Divide Records
* Climate Records
* Purchase Record
* Growing season notes
* Gardening Resources
* A diary of which plants are working well and which should be removed.

Once you see the actual plan of your garden (the one you pictured in your mind), you will see how valuable your garden journal has become.

For the serious gardener, shoeboxes full of notes are not enough and we can never find them when we actually need them. Even though it is more time consuming, a garden planner type of journal will record years of information and detailed data on bloom time, requirements, color and design, with added observations on a log of activities.

Try to create a journal that is easy to maintain once it is started. As the seasons go by you will find that you have a jump-start on your other gardener buddies because you have already documented successes on which to build in future garden seasons. You will also know what didn’t work in the past (too big, too little, invasive, downright ugly), and be sure not to make the same mistakes again.

Give emphasis to environmental events like rainfall, dry seasons, and frost dates. Planting dates for seeds and transplanting dates of plants, shrubs, and trees are extremely important. Also, plant characteristics, harvest dates, date and type of fertilizer or other chemicals applied are great statistics to apply for future reference.

Again, gardening should be fun. While the purpose of the garden journal is to improve gardening results, don’t let it become a tedious project that becomes more work than pleasure. Remember, the journal is designed to provide documentation that should improve results. It will help by providing a self-guided journey to gardening superiority. We garden to create beauty in our surroundings and because we love to make things grow. What better way can we create a living history of our labors of love than by the pictures and words of our garden journal?

Our local Master Gardeners will be holding a spring plant sale on March 26, 2011. They will be selling plants that grow well in our coastal area and experts will be available to answer questions regarding particular plants and assist with placement and requirements of sun. To find out more information call 361-790-0103 or go to our web site at: [www.aspmastergardeners.org](http://www.aspmastergardeners.org).