

Gardening ~ Get In Touch With Mother Nature

By Karen McBride

Springtime is when the dormant trees wake up from their long winter nap, plants in our gardens break through the blanket of leaves and begin to sprout, and brightly colored flowers bloom. Some of us are not gifted with a green thumb, so this is a good time to learn more about the correct way to maintain a garden. Gardening is known to be therapeutic, and in these busy times, we need to find ways to reduce the stress in our lives, forget our troubles, and get in touch with Mother Nature.

The key is to start with one small area, learn how to maintain it well - with the right soil, ample supply of water and the appropriate plants for the amount of sunlight available. You can go to the garden center of a superstore and select your own, or you can get more personalized, expert advice at Annie's Garden Shed, owned by Patti Schaefer.

Schaefer enjoyed making garden planters for her friends and neighbors. She would create her works of art at her house and, eventually, found that she needed more room to store the inventory. Despite a sluggish economy and an oncoming recession, Schaefer opened her store in November 2007. "I knew it wasn't the best time to start a new business, but I just decided to go for it," said Schaefer. The original store was located on Highway 41, south of the current location at 100 4th Avenue NW in Lutz.

Annie's Garden Shed is named after Schaefer's grandmother. She was a fun person who loved to travel and "didn't know a stranger." She also loved gardening. So when Schaefer was trying to come up with a title for her store, she wanted to name it after her beloved grandmother.

Even if you are not looking to take up gardening as your new



Colorful pottery of various shapes and sizes will enhance your garden and they make great gifts

hobby, you will enjoy shopping at Annie's Garden Shed. You can find that special gift for someone; a garden basket with a variety of herbs for the cooking enthusiast or a butterfly garden for someone who enjoys nature. The colorful pottery of various shapes and sizes make great gifts and are supplied by different companies, such as Campania that makes the Cast stone pottery and Atlantic Pottery on the west coast of Florida. Schaefer looks for local artists that create environmentally safe art and use recycled materials. Unique metal sculptures by Karyn's Art can be purchased, along with garden whimsies by Mary Marabal. Lanterns created from wine bottles, and glass stones with (a natural version of) citronella like candles by Stacy Robinson of "Get Lit".

If you are interested in creating your own fairy garden, be sure to sign up for the Enchanted Miniature Fairy Garden Class. The cost of the class ranges from \$45-\$49 dependent upon the size of the Terra Cotta dish you choose. Also included in the cost is a garden fairy, arbor stones, moss, 5 plants and your choice of another fairy garden accessory. It's a great way to spend time with friends and you are able to bring home a beautiful garden to display.

Other services offered include

creating pots for businesses to brighten the entryway or surround an outdoor eating area. The foliage are changed and freshened up on a regular basis. The plants can be selected for the seasons and special events.

Schaefer designs gardens for homeowners as well. She likes to

work with what you already have and add to it, selecting the right plants for each area. "Teaching the customer how to take care of their own gardens is the key to a beautiful garden," said Schaefer.

A new undertaking for Annie's Garden Shed is sponsoring a Garden Club. The club meets once a month on Sunday afternoons. Plans for the club include a visit to Bock Towers and Epcot Center. "The idea for the club has had an overwhelming response. Annie's will sponsor the club, but it will be run by members of the group."

Annie's Garden Shed is open Monday through Saturday 9:00 am -5:00 pm and Sunday 11:00 am-4:00 pm. For more information call 813-949-2600, or visit the website www.anniesgardenshed.com.

When creating your garden, you will need to first come up with a design. Feng Shui is known to be a way of life, which helps us to be

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in harmony with our environment. Ancient Chinese philosophers saw that the movement of the sun and planets affects all living things. The Chinese used companion planting techniques and planted according to solar and lunar cycles. It is all about planting in the right place at the right time.

It is important to have a basic knowledge of the elements and how they interact with one another. The Feng Shui garden consists of five elements - Water, Earth, Metal, Wood, and Fire. Trickling streams and metal wall fountains will provide a beautiful tranquil focal point, but do not use a fountain made of ceramic or stone. The earth element counteracts the positive effects of water according to Feng Shui principles. If you cannot have a fountain or pond, you can symbolize water with the use of the colors blue or black. The elements must be balanced, for example too much water will cancel out fire.

The use of rocks and large

stones, clay statues and terracotta urns represents Earth and mountains. Metal balances the negative effects of Earth and can be symbolized in furniture, garden borders, wind chimes and sculptures. Wood is a symbol of birth and new life, and trees are the typical symbol of this element. Fire can be represented with the color red as well as an outdoor fireplace or solar garden stake lights.

You may have heard of Yin and yang - negative and positive. A growing plant is yang and the plant dying and the seeds falling to the ground is yin. One is not better than the other. In fact, they must both exist for balance. In order to appreciate light, there must be darkness.

You must take the time to work on your garden in order to reflect a healthy energy around your home. Do not allow the plants to become overridden with weeds. In a Feng Shui garden, you should avoid cactus, roses, bougainvillea,

and other thorn-ridden plants. Plants to shop for include Jade Plant, Peonies, Silver Crown, Chrysanthemums, Money Plant, Plum Blossom, Narcissus, Lilies, and Bamboo.

Lilies make ideal indoor plants because they can neutralize common pollutants, such as formaldehyde, which can be found in carpets and paints. For outdoor plants that can stand up to the hot Florida heat, choose from orange trees, magnolias, and Dwarf banana plants.

Animals represent symbols in Feng Shui. For example, the lion is considered a symbol of the sun, since it is strong and courageous. A pair of lion statues at the opening to your garden or home will protect the place from bad luck. To find beautiful symbolic statues for your garden, visit Eve's Garden Gifts, located at 5602 Land O' Lakes Boulevard.

Wind chimes priced, ceramic figurines, and dream stones with

encouraging words of joy, peace, and harmony will enhance your garden or planters. A wooden Pagoda bird feeder will encourage birds to visit your newly created zen garden.

One of Eve's Garden Gifts' specialties is Bonsai trees. There are many sizes and shapes to choose from. Be sure to visit the website www.evesgardengifts.com/index.aspx for instructions on taking care of your bonsai, lucky bamboo and to learn more about Feng Shui. For more information, call 813-996-5012.

Gardening will not only give you a new hobby and relieve some stress, but it will also make your home more inviting. During these hectic times, what better way to spend the day, than to be in your garden, with the colorful beauty and aroma of blooming flowers. Whether you are relaxing with a good book or grabbing your gardening gloves and digging in, your garden is the place to be.

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