

The American GARDENER

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NOTES FROM RIVER FARM

BEING A GOOD gardener and taking good care of the earth go hand-in-hand. Gardeners typically have keen observation skills and a heightened awareness of the rhythms of nature, as well as an appreciation, built from experience, for the significance of each decision we make or action we take.

The results of some of our actions occur relatively quickly and are very visible. Garden tasks such as raking up leaves, deadheading a flower bed, or planting a vegetable garden can deliver near instant gratification. The rewards of other endeavors may take much longer to materialize, or deliver results that are less tangible. For example, growing an exquisite specimen bonsai is an exercise in patience that spans decades. Or, consider the implications of setting up a compost bin or replacing a water-thirsty and resource-intensive lawn with low maintenance ornamental grasses and perennials. Both actions will deliver benefits to the garden and to the environment, but over a much greater period. As gardeners, we have the good fortune to enjoy a unique mix of watchful anticipation and outright satisfaction on a daily basis.

The AHS is committed to encouraging gardeners to become good stewards of the earth by helping them make well-informed, responsible decisions about how they garden. We firmly believe that American gardeners can, and should, be role models for citizen action, a philosophy that is ingrained in our educational programs. One example of this is the Green Garage® initiative that is highlighted in each issue of our magazine. To broaden the reach of this program, we created a traveling educational exhibit that has been viewed by thousands of people at flower shows and botanical gardens nationwide. A model Green Garage, now bedecked with a green roof, is on permanent display here at our River Farm headquarters.

In this issue, be sure to read the informative Green Garage article on composters and composting. Feature articles include design advice for water-thrifty gardens, tips for beautifying curbside strips, top choices of dramatic annual foliage plants for summer plantings, and a profile of hardy hibiscuses.

In the course of our outreach through events and programs, AHS Board and staff members have the chance to meet many gardeners and horticulturists from across the country who are doing great things. Earlier this year, while scouting the Portland, Oregon, region for an upcoming AHS tour, we visited the Oregon Garden in Silverton. In addition to its beautiful plant displays, the garden is home to an innovative wetlands project that filters the city's treated wastewater and recycles it as irrigation water for the garden. If your summer travels take you to the Pacific Northwest, be sure to see for yourself how the Oregon Garden and the citizens of Silverton have adopted a creative and collaborative approach to environmental responsibility.

The world is truly our garden and we all have important roles to play. By being informed, making good decisions, and serving as models for our children, neighbors, and communities, together we are making a difference.

Happy gardening!

Susie Usrey, Chair, AHS Board of Directors
Tom Underwood, Executive Director

