



Adding Color to Your World

By Doug Zlatin, Community Wellness Committee Member

There's something magical about strolling through a yard or neighborhood and feasting your senses on the abundant variety of decorative plantings. Brightly colored flowers, the heady scent of blossoms, busy activity of pollinators, lush green leaves, and a variety of textures combine to bring a feeling of peace and an intimate connection to nature. Whether you're experienced or just a beginner, spring is a great time to walk your property and consider the possibilities for accenting its landscape. Bulbs planted in the fall yield early blossoms come spring. Ornamental perennials provide years of pleasure. Annuals allow you to experiment with different varieties and hues. Flowering shrubs burst with early colors followed by interesting foliage that fill in your garden and walkway spaces. Even many trees offer colorful blooms.

If you don't have room for a garden bed – or your sunny spots are limited to a patio, deck, window box or doorstep – all you need are containers and a bit of imagination to attract pollinators and yield delicious veggies, useful herbs, or cut flowers for your table. No rules here; anything goes! From fancy ceramics to home-built wooden structures, fabric pots with handles, plastic buckets, or reclaimed items. What about an old kitchen kettle or teapot, child's wagon, watering can, rowboat or hollowed out tree stump? Remember that perennial pots can be moved inside and enjoyed year-round. Containers don't hold as much moisture, so their plantings will need more watering. If a container bottom is solid and deeper than 12 inches, small rocks can provide needed drainage, or you could drill a few holes. A pot's planting medium is critical, requiring a mix designed specifically for containers. You can also mix your own using soil (or not), compost, peat, and vermiculite. There are many recipes.

Things to consider when choosing plantings include: what colors, types and/or fragrances to emphasize; the use of native species; and matching recommended exposures – full sun (6-8 hours), partial, or shade – to an area's sunlight pattern. Testing the soil and applying necessary nutrients is important for outdoor beds. The abundance of choices available for plant selection can be overwhelming, so don't be shy about asking questions. Gardeners love to share their experiences. Knowledgeable staff at our local garden shops and greenhouses are happy to help, as are these [Community Wellness Guide](#) resources:

- Cooperative Extension for soil testing, articles on plant selection and care, and a mentoring program that pairs you with a master gardener volunteer;
- Garden clubs (e.g., Foreside, St. Mary's);
- Falmouth Memorial Library's impressive gardening section.

YOU ARE INVITED to explore one of Falmouth's hidden gems and learn about healthy soil and living at ***Gardening for Wellness, Saturday, June 18, 10 am-noon, Gardens at Tidewater Farm.***