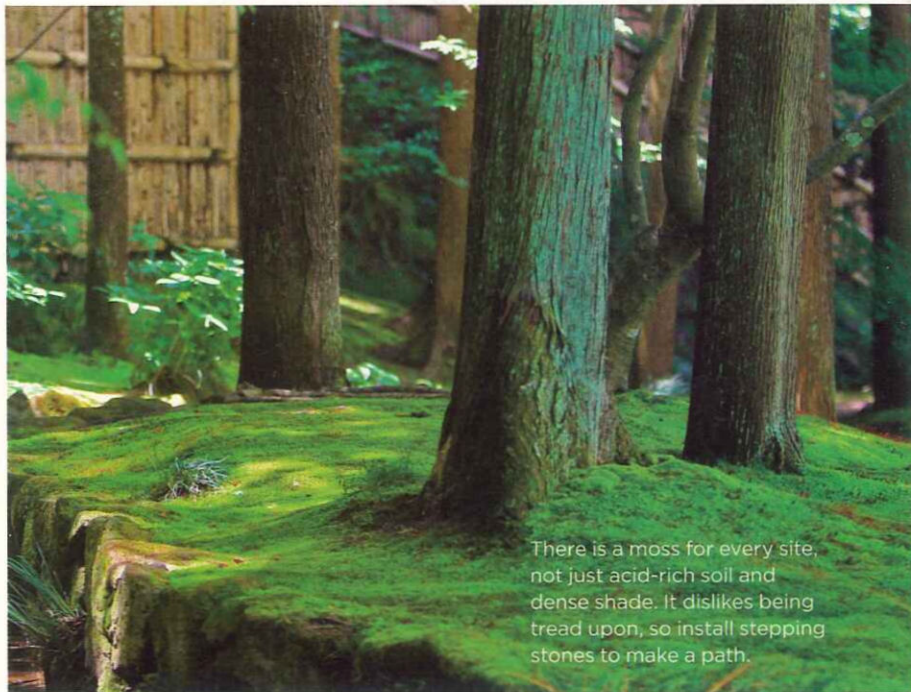




# Problems Solved

The pros answer your questions



There is a moss for every site, not just acid-rich soil and dense shade. It dislikes being tread upon, so install stepping stones to make a path.

Written by **Cynthia Van Hazinga**

**Q:** How can I make a small garden look larger? My yard is flat and has a few large conifers but little else.

MRS. TONY HARRIS, AGAWAM, MA

Small gardens are great for creativity! For a stylish look, select annuals in dark colors such as purple, blue and green for background—try Wave petunias in purple—and brighter colors like yellow, orange and red (such as Zahara zinnias) in the foreground to make the space appear larger. Limit the number of flower colors and choose those that blend well together, repeating them throughout the landscape, suggests Jessie Atchison, consumer brand manager at Ball Horticultural Company. Plants that are vertical, smaller in size, or fine-textured with open branches and

delicate flowers make space seem more open. Serena Angelonia is a great option. By leaving the center of your garden open, you draw the eye to the edges. Add depth by using layering techniques or plant medium-size shrubs and smaller plants under the large conifers to add a sense of space. If you can, “borrow” space beyond your yard: Leave neighboring views open. A winding path through the length of the yard is a great finishing touch, again creating a feeling of more space.

**Q:** Can you really grow moss instead of grass? Doesn't it die when stepped on?

ALICE PUCHINELLO, RICHMOND, VA

Lovely, bright-green moss lawns are a concept that's catching on fast. No



one knows more about them than Christine Cook, a Southwestern Connecticut ecological landscape designer, who calls her business Mossaics. "There's a moss for every situation," she tells us, "so a preliminary site analysis will tell you if you need moss that likes it wet or dry, shady, in full sun, in acid soil or not." Cook grows 38 species and says it's a misunderstanding that all mosses love acidic conditions. As ever, it's the right plant for the right place. What's more, moss is low-care once established, it's evergreen and deer don't like it.

True, mosses don't like heavy foot traffic—so create a path. Paths set in moss are very pretty, as the moss creeps onto the stone or brick and softens the edges. On rock walls, it can give an "instant ancient" look. Never steal moss from the woods, Cook cautions. "Check out the nurseries in your area and make sure their moss is nursery-propagated. Contact the agricultural college in your state for recommendations."

**Q:** I would love to grow an apple tree that bears delicious fruit. How long would it take, and would I have to spray with pesticides?

DEANNA FLINTSTROM, CHESTERTOWN, MD

In contrast to apple trees of yore, which grew large and took a long time to bear, today's apple trees are available in a range of sizes, some of which bear as soon as 2 to 3 years after planting. According to Lee Reich, a garden consultant specializing in fruit plants and soil, rootstocks influence size and bear-

ing age but have little effect on the fruit, so a "McIntosh" apple will be the same fruit on any of these trees. Generally, varieties grown on dwarfing or semi-dwarfing rootstocks bear quickest. Apples have serious pest problems over the eastern half of the country. To reliably harvest edible fruits, plan on spraying regularly, using the right materials at the right times as specified on pesticide labels. Pest control info is available from local Cooperative Extension offices. Organic sprays are a possibility, although they are less effective than

synthetics and require more frequent application. An excellent resource for growing apples is *The Apple Grower* by Michael Phillips (Chelsea Green, 2005). Lee Reich ([leereich.com](http://leereich.com)) is the author of *A Northeast Gardener's Year*, *The Pruning Book*, *Weedless Gardening*, *Uncommon Fruits for Every Garden* and *Landscaping with Fruit*. \*

**BELOW:** Apple trees have come a long way since the days of Johnny Appleseed. Today, dwarf varieties offer apples of every kind and grow in smaller spaces.



**Got a question?** Send queries to Ask the Experts, c/o Woman's Day SIPs, 1633 Broadway, 42nd floor, New York, NY 10019; send e-mail to [experts@hfmus.com](mailto:experts@hfmus.com); or fax us at 212-767-5618. Include your name, address and daytime phone number. We regret that we are unable to reply to every question.