

Garden Plotting: City Dwellers Get Country

By Mud Baron

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Photo courtesy [Shawna Coronado](#)

It's the third day of 80 degree-weather in Los Angeles and you may be feeling like we missed spring. Spring is planting time and that takes the right seeds. I've written about companies that offer really great product, but nothing is better than the experience of friends. Their favorites might be your favorites too. Seeing that there is no "Yelp" for backyard gardens, I rely on my cadre of gardeners, garden writers and twitter cohorts to aide my planting decisions for the 2011 Season. I've leaned over the virtual fence of the internet to ask for advice from my community of gardeners. I've asked a dozen of stellar plant geeks to share their favorites with you.

With the catalogs alone I always fall prey to temptation. We all need a filter sometimes and here we have my gardening cohorts' best intentions to rely upon. These garden "tweeps" from all over the "internets" were asked to submit their 2011 planting season conspiracy lists. These are gardeners and their dreams. Maybe you will glean from their years of killing plants some glimmer of brilliance for your own P. Allen Smith Garden Home (or in my case, Hovel). You can use their brains to act as a filter...I know I will.

And thank god I have smart friends like Shirley Bovshow, Billy Goodnik, Daniel Bowman Simon and even 14-year old chicken wrangler Orren Fox. After about 3 pages of any [garden catalog perusal](#) I'm just filled with the "gimmes." I'm stupid by way of desire. I'm overwhelmed with "new heirloom tomato introductions." Call it "gardener's last call." Any Beef Master Tom...ato will do. Why do those seed companies spend major chunks of their budget on photographer's sexy glamorr shots of eggplants and cucumbers? It works. After furious thumbing of pages I don't care if the varieties really don't work in my [backyard's Sunset climate map](#). I'm tempted to make a go of it. Besides, it was 80 (feeling 90) over this winter weekend, so those maps are in need of a [post-Kyoto-Climate-Treaty meltdown](#) makeover anyway.

First up is Chicago's Shawna Coronado of GardeningNude.com. Love that, right? She's @shawnacoronado if you'd like to follow her on Twitter and you'll find she's oh-so-constantly enthusiastic and encouraging as her readers kill plants. She adores compost and it is the magic that makes her, or anyone else's, garden rock. Hopefully you'll glean

insight into her process (yes, there is one) as you get green at home. Shawna likes Burpee Home Gardens for her plants @BHGardens and Botanical Interests Seed Co @botanicalseeds for, well, seeds. You'd be wise to consider her lead as no matter the designers intention, the plants gotta' have heart. And yes it's Chicago 4 USDA Climate zones away from LA. All of these will grow in So Cal and some will do even better. Look at her garden as a menu and order what YOU like.

Says Shawna:

My rough design for the front lawn veggie garden - mostly fresh plants. I have a list of seeds I want to grow, but I haven't firmed it up yet. SO - this is the initial plan.

30 Lettuce Plants - Alfresco Simply Salad
20 Cauliflower Plants - Cheddar
30 Swiss Chard Plants - Bright Lights
24 Cabbage Plants - Pacifica
40 Onion Plants - Red Zeppelin
3 Tomato Plants - Fresh Salsa
2 Tomato Plants - Early Girl
5 Squash Plants - Burpee Hybrid Zucchini
5 Cucumber Plants - Sweet Burpless
2 Tomato Plants - Yellow Pear
20 Bean Plants - Blue Lake Pole Beans
2 Pepper Plants - Pinot Noir
4 Pepper Plants - Flavorburst
10 Broccoli Plants - Flash Broccoli
30 Basil Plants - Red Rubin

Additional plants below - this is to place in the back garden and in my container gardens so I might include more recipes for the cooking series on how to help feed your family for little money from your garden (I'm trying to encourage city-dwellers to grow more vegetables in containers)

20 Celery Plants - Tango
20 Pak Choi Plants - Toy Choy
20 Spinach Plants - Bloomsdale
10 Rosemary Plants
10 Basil Plants - Sweet Mammoth
6 Artichoke Plants - Imperial Star
5 Eggplant Plants - Purple Blaze

Also - I'll be sticking with the same "sunburst/sunray" design from last year but substituting some of the above plants in the design. However, it'll give you an idea of what the ornamental aspect of my front lawn veggie garden is and how it'll look.

Nice work Shawna. Easy-Peasy. Now all of you Angelenos have a little more inspiration to go get grubby at your house (or on your apartment balcony). Notice a few things: First she wedded the wish list to the space. There's only so much room and she prioritized. If Weiser Farms has a great variety of carrots that you buy at the Farmers' Market, ask them what it is and try it. I'm not saying that Chicago or Tehachapi have their "terroir," no, wait I am.

So regardless of what the "experts" think only you can be the expert of your little farm. You will only learn by doing...gardens evolve. No two seasons are alike, nor places. So while Chicago has wet summers that we don't know, realize that in LA you are not going to grow cauliflower and tomatoes at the same time. Shawna also spaced the plant like school pictures: tall kids in the back, etc... Ask yourself, "What does my space want" OK. Now go put the laptop down. Discuss. I'll be back with the next garden plot soon.