

# Great gardens start with a great plan

(ARA) - Setting out to create a garden that is uniquely one's own is an exciting yet overwhelming process for many homeowners. The goal should be to build a space that is beautiful, comfortable and convenient for personal use and enjoyment. Having a plan is important to aid any project, whether homeowners prefer large garden beds and borders or smaller container gardens.

"Plants are the lifeblood of every garden, with their ability to constantly evolve and surprise with the seasons," says Linda Guy, new product development director for Novalis Plants that Work. Successfully blending living plants with the inert objects they surround; like decks, fences, walkways, walls and containers, takes persistence but is conversely enjoyable.

With the help of plant consortium Novalis Plants that Work, garden design and maintenance takes on a whole new dimension. Guy travels the world to search for exciting new plants. She and the Novalis grower network have dedicated themselves to helping homeowners become successful gardeners by providing easy-care "plants that work" for diverse conditions.

## Build Layers for Depth

A good place to start in creating a plan for large garden beds and borders is to choose trees and shrubs for the foundation. Building a solid basis visually anchors the garden bed with a background, providing substance and maintaining interest with layers of plants in varying heights and sizes. Characteristics for year-round appeal include flowers, fruit, berries, spring foliage, fall foliage, texture and structure.

With a goal of horticulture how-to education for homeowners, Novalis established its Plants that Work line to cultivate ornamental shrubs, perennials, vines, and small trees that offer homeowners options for starting successful foundation gardens. Two such

varieties Guy recommends include the fast-growing *Diervilla* 'Cool Splash,' a foliage plant with variegated green and white leaves, and *Hydrangea* 'White Diamonds,' boasting large white flowers.

"Consider planting small ornamental trees at each corner to draw the eye outward and add texture and height to the garden," Guy says. "Tall plantings at the corners help soften the edges and tie the look of the space together." She suggests *Acer* 'Shiraz,' an upright maple featuring burgundy variegated foliage.

Next, build out the garden with a second layer of varied sizes of shrubs and perennials with different bloom times. The *Hypericum* Mystical Series offers the appeal of berries for color and texture. Planting specific varieties in a range of foliage, blooms or berries will allocate a distinctive medley of styles all year.

## Accent with Color

Homeowners who love colorful gardens will enjoy annuals, like *Geranium* 'Angel Eyes Orange' in the front layers of their flower beds and in containers for bursts of color throughout the landscape. Guy suggests picking plants with diverse shades and tints like ones her horticulture colleges grow for the Plants that Work by Color rich-hue line.

"For attention-grabbing impact, position colorful perennials in descending order of mature height, with the tallest in back, then mid-sized plants, and the shortest plants in front," Guy advises. "Then, group three of the same perennials, like *Phlox* 'Cotton Candy' or *Bletilla* 'Chinese Butterfly' in triangular arrangements throughout open areas."

For smaller areas or where gardens need touches of color and appeal, the Novalis team created Plants that Work in Nooks & Crannies. These diverse plants fit in small-scale applications, like containers, the front layer of gar-

den beds, along walkways and on green roofs. "Challenged with bare patches or weeds that grow up in pathway crevices, home gardeners can use succulents and other small-stature Plants that Work in Nooks & Crannies because they grow in the toughest conditions," Guy advises.

## Choose Plants Carefully

Once homeowners have a plan for filling in the different layers of their landscapes, it is important plants are designated for the right areas. "Consider the available space and the sun that space receives each day," Guy

says. "Size and sun are two important considerations when planning a garden," Guy and her team have developed the Plants that Work in the Shade and Bring on the Heat lines to take the guesswork out of plant selection. For full sun gardens expecting high humidity, homeowners can look to Bring on the Heat varieties like *Baptisia* 'Carolina Moonlight' with high drought tolerance.

Most homeowners want outdoor spaces to be relaxing sanctuaries, and privacy is crucial. Blocking distracting views is an important goal in a landscape plan. Guy suggests Plants that Work's line of screening bamboo, including *Phyllostachys bissetti*, a vigorous timber bamboo with dark, emerald-green canes and leaves.

"Homeowners can use bamboo to shield sunlight, as a privacy screen, hedge or windbreak," Guy says. "Bamboo is sustainable and produces more oxygen, offering a soothing, cooling effect." Picking plants based on meeting homeowner needs is the start to a logical and enjoyable space.

To learn more about Novalis Plants that Work programs and varieties that will work in each region, visit [www.plantsthatwork.com](http://www.plantsthatwork.com).

*Courtesy of ARAcontent*





**Plants that Work  
make great additions  
to the garden for  
year-round appeal  
with variegated,  
colorful foliage  
throughout spring,  
summer and fall.**

**PHOTO CREDIT: Novalis Plants that Work**

ARA