

A garden of new apps springs up

By Steve Wood

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Move over, shovel. There's a new gardening tool in town.

Garden apps have been springing up on smart phones for years, allowing you to stay connected while getting away from it all. Some apps identify plant species and their natural pests, others design virtual gardens.

However, not everyone is for gadgets in the garden.

"I don't see how apps can help you, when my experience is half the people are asking the wrong questions, or they're obsessed about learning the name of a weed," says Mike McGrath, host of WHYY-FM's (90.9 FM) weekly Saturday program *You Bet Your Garden*.

However, Leonard Schroeder, owner of Bloomers Home & Garden Center in Sewell, N.J., says more resources gives plants a better chance.

"No one has fun when stuff dies," Schroeder says. "These apps reinforce information that you might not be able to get without talking to an expert."

Here are some worthwhile apps.

Leafsnap

Leafsnap, the one app Becky Szkotak has on her iPhone for "horticulture gardening stuff," needs only a photograph of a leaf, cone or fruit to identify its species, rendering high-resolution images of

its flowers, petiole, seeds, bark and fruit.

"If there's a plant I don't know, you take a picture of the leaf and it gives you three recommendations that match up with the picture," says Szkotak, the master gardener coordinator of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Camden County, N.J. "It's similar to facial recognition."

The free mobile app includes the trees of New York City and Washington, D.C., but will expand to cover the trees of the entire continental U.S., according to developers Columbia University, the University of Maryland and the Smithsonian Institution.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/leafsnap-for-ipad/id433522683?mt=8>

Dirr's Tree and Shrub Finder

Michael A. Dirr offers a definitive 1,325-page guide of everything agriculture, *The Manual of Woody Landscape Plant*, and in his \$14.99 mobile app "Dirr's Tree and Shrub Finder."

"The best thing about the book and the app is it is understandable, it's easy and it's short," Schroeder says.

The mobile app's plant database of 1,670 species and 7,800 cultivars — including 7,600 high-quality images of trees, shrubs, vines and ground covers — is searchable by 72 criteria.

But \$14.99 is still a lot for an app. Which gardener would shell out that kind of green?

"I would, for something like Michael Dirr," Szkotak says. "His books are so good, so concise."

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dirrs-tree-and-shrub-finder/id410437012?mt=8>

Garden Buddy

For \$1.99, the Garden Buddy calculates how much mulch, sod and topsoil to use, along with determining what type of fertilizer to add once you plug in soil-test results.

Its database of 47 common vegetables tells you how much to grow to feed your family, when to plant what and when to harvest.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/garden-buddy/id368362562?mt=8>

Bugs and insects

The app helps find the fiends feasting on your harvest with a database of more than 900 pests. The 99-cent app allows you to create a lineup of culprits to watch out for.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-insects/id332511130?mt=8>

Burpee Garden Coach

Via its website, Burpee Home Gardens presents a free app that allows you to grow with your garden.

Through helpful text messages and online interaction with Burpee buffs, you learn how to choose, grow, maintain, harvest and eat backyard-grown veggies.

"You periodically get a text message and it's not

annoying," Schroeder says. "Every couple weeks, it'll tell you 'It's time to put in your tomatoes,' or suggest what to look out for. It's like a coach, and it doesn't try to sell you anything, which is the best part."

Find at: www.burpeehomegardens.com/GardenHelp/coachmevideo.aspx

Eden Garden Designer

With Eden Garden Designer, you can digitally create a perfect or practical oasis by choosing from 40 realistic plants to add to a photo of your backyard or a sketch of a landscape.

For extra realism, filter by climate zone, blooming season, color, height and type.

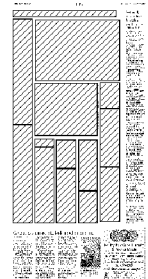
The 99-cent app is available on iPad, iPod and iPhone.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/eden-garden-designer/id320621343?mt=8>

Botany Buddy

Like Dirr's app, Botany Buddy focuses solely on trees and shrubs and doesn't require an Internet connection to access its library of 2,000 species.

A connection is required, however, to share your collection with fellow tree and shrub enthusiasts. The app provides very detailed information and also enables registered users to share collections with fellow tree and shrub enthusiasts through the Botany Buddy website. And at \$9.99,



it's not as expensive as Dirr's.

But Apple users may find the reference application more difficult to navigate with an absent A-Z directory.

Each item in the library includes 25 of the most important pieces of information about the plant including growth habit, size, usage, pros and cons, cultural information, and its native range.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/botany-buddy/id327837061?mt=8>

The Plant Doctor

This \$1.99 iPhone app deduces the root of the problem and a detailed solution after you choose from a field of 32 common symptoms.

If the problem is not listed, fill out a form on the application to receive

advice and an official diagnosis from a professional plant pathologist.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-plant-doctor/id306625566?mt=8>

Vegetable Gardening Guide

For \$2.99, this app gives iPhone and iPad users simple step-by-step planting instructions, including how to install drop irrigation, growing-season information, and recipes specific to the veggies you harvest.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vegetable-gardening-guide/id366357035?mt=8>

Audubon Birds — A Field Guide to North American Birds

No relation to Audu-

bon, this app is for the birds, and for Schroeder.

Based on the authoritative National Audubon Society Field Guides, the app doesn't require an Internet connection to access its thousands of plants and animals, including more than 8,000 professional color photographs, 2,300 bird songs and calls, and in-depth species descriptions with updated information about behavior.

Its eBird tracker allows users to report and locate rare bird sightings in specific towns across the country.

Developed by Green Mountain Digital, the app isn't nearly free as a bird at \$19.99 but still pretty fly.

Find at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/audubon-birds-field-guide/id333227386?mt=8>



Brittany Russo looks up this purple rockcress on Durr's Tree and Shrub Finder app at Bloomers Home & Garden Center in Sewell, N.J. GANNETT PHOTOS



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