

Moon Gardening

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It is no secret that the summer is my favorite time of the year. That is not to say that I love the stretch of 100° days that we have been having, but I do love the carefree nature of summer! The kids are out of school, families are going on vacation, the trees are swaying in the breeze, we are planning dinners around our fresh garden vegetables, and the summer flowers are showing us stunning color! But as we have turned the calendar to August, it is becoming clear that these summer carefree days are changing into school days and time spent at extracurricular activities, civic meetings, and fewer vacation days. And just as the days are getting busier, they are also becoming shorter. These are all important factors when we are considering what we should plant next.

Nighttime gardens, also known as moon gardens, are a wonderful choice for this time of year. This type of garden is specifically designed to be enjoyed after sunset. The goal of a moon garden is to create a serene atmosphere where we can enjoy the beauty of the garden in the fading daylight and under the moonlight. A moon garden engages multiple senses, focusing on fragrance, texture, and peacefulness. This type of garden includes plants and elements that are fragrant in the evenings or that stand out in low light conditions.

The most important step in planting a moon garden is selecting the correct plants. We need to choose a variety of plants that are known for their ability to thrive in the evening and night, as well as in the specific climate of the Big Country. A moon garden will include night-blooming flowers that emit captivating scents, white and light-colored blooms, and those that are known to open in the evening. Some popular choices for moon gardens include: (1) night-blooming jasmine, (2) evening primrose, (3) moonflower, (4) white or pale-colored roses, and (5) silver-leaved plants like lamb's ear. White, pale yellows, silvers, and light blues often stand out beautifully in the low light conditions of a moon garden. However, a white hibiscus or a light pink daylily would not be an ideal choice because they typically bloom during the day. Also, keep in mind that fragrance plays a significant role in a moon garden's uniqueness. Four o'clocks, nicotiana, and hummingbird mint all release a pleasant evening scent.

Another consideration for planning a moon garden is the layout and design. Make sure that the layout of the garden takes advantage of the moon's natural light. But you can also incorporate subtle lighting elements to enhance the evening atmosphere. Solar-powered lights, candles, and string lights can add a touch of magic without overpowering the natural beauty of the moonlight. Try moving containers to different locations and perhaps placing them on reflective surfaces like light-colored gravel or white stones to amplify the moonlight. You can also paint a background wall white or use a trellis of white lattice as a reflective surface; the trellis has the added benefit of being a place to grow a vine such as a desert clematis.

Of course, the foremost factor is to make the moon garden accessible and comfortable for you. Consider placing the seating in a strategic spot to take advantage of the best moonlit views, but most importantly, place seating in a spot that you will actually use. If that space does not have the best moonlit view but it is a place that you can quickly access and get a few minutes of peace and quiet than that is the perfect spot! "They" say that spending time in gardens is shown to have various therapeutic benefits including reducing stress, improving mood, and promoting relaxation. Something that we could all use a little more of!

Creating a moon garden in our area can be a rewarding and enjoyable project. It is a wonderful way to make the most of your outdoor space during the cooler evening hours while taking a few moments for yourself.

As always, if you have any gardening questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you will like us on Facebook and visit bcmgtx.org for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!