

weeding out THE GARDEN MYTHS

STORY AND PHOTOS **MELANIE REKOLA**

As a landscape designer and certified horticulturalist, I come across a lot of misconceptions when it comes to gardening.

Myth 1: *Cedar trees attract mosquitoes*

Reality: In nature, cedar grows in moist soil, which mosquitoes adore. It's not actually the cedar that attracts them, though mosquitoes are attracted to shaded environments of any type.

Myth 2: *Garden lines have to be curvaceous*

Reality: Some spaces don't have the room to accommodate the serpentine lines loved by many. Sometimes straight lines just work better and can be equally striking.

Myth 3: *Existing garden soil needs cultivation*

Reality: Cultivation of the earth around existing perennials and shrubs breaks their vital hair roots, thus injuring the plant.

Myth 4: *Gardens are a lot of work*

Reality: Start gardens with a thick layer of good quality soil with additional bonemeal supplement. Spread a good layer of mulch yearly to retard weeds and keep moisture in. Do this and a garden will need little weeding and may never need fertilization or supplemental watering after establishment. How's that for low maintenance?

Myth 5: *Vegetable gardens are an eyesore*

Reality: Veggie garden placement counts. Raised planter boxes add definition and look great flanking a path. Edibles such as leaf lettuce have lovely foliage and many food plants sport pretty blossoms. Am I the only one that finds beauty here?



Myth 6: *Containers are only for annuals*

Reality: Many trees and shrubs can live in pots for years. They need less care and watering plus offer a bigger bang for your buck than a typical annual display. For example, a \$20 Curly Willow shrub can survive for years in a large pot, has amazing form and makes a bold statement. Compare that with what you have to spend on annual displays over a three-year span.



Myth 7: *Trees stop growing*

Reality: Trees don't reach a certain height then suddenly stop growing. Some trees do have shorter or slimmer habits that suit smaller spaces. Remember, if trees were planted for the height they will reach in 50-100 years, few of us would plant them.



Myth 8: *Bees sting unprovoked*

Reality: Flowering plant materials are fine poolside choices. Just because you have more skin showing does not make your chances of being stung any greater, though flailing around wildly will increase the likelihood! Stay calm and learn to enjoy and respect bees.

Myth 9: *Overwatering isn't harmful*

Reality: All new plantings require water to establish, yet overwatering quickly drowns plants. Stick your finger in the soil. If you feel moisture, don't water. Plant roots require gaseous exchange for survival and need to dry out a bit between waterings to accommodate this.

Myth 10: *Vines are bad for intact brickwork and woodwork*

Reality: Current studies show vines such as ivy act as a thermal blanket, warming up walls by 15 per cent in cold weather and offer a cooling effect in hot weather by 36 per cent. Plus they look gorgeous! But take care to keep vines out of windows and soffits.

Myth 11: *Landscape designers are landscape architects or garden designers*

Reality: Landscape designers approach design as a whole, including pool, patios and outdoor living spaces, trees and gardens, lighting and even outdoor furniture and accessories. Think of us as exterior designers. ☺

