Review and Renew Your Garden
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Gardens are works in progress. Just when you thought your garden was set for the summer, maybe your lettuce isn’t thriving in the same spot as last year, your bush beans were better off next to the tomatoes, and your petunias are leggy and bloom-less. Maybe you’re watering less than your garden needs because your plants aren’t conveniently located near your hose.

As you know, the effects of weather, bugs, or diseases can be unpredictable. But there’s still a lot you can do to have a successful garden. Summer is the perfect time to evaluate your garden for improvements you can make before next spring’s planting season arrives. Based on what you see now, what would you like to change? Here are three steps to help you review and renew your garden.

**Step 1: Evaluate your garden site.** What are its strengths and weaknesses?

**Soil:** If it’s too shallow, plants won’t have plenty of room for healthy root systems. Plan to add a few inches of topsoil and compost in the fall, or create raised beds with frames made of untreated white oak, composite plastic boards or cinder blocks.

**Rows or planters:** Are they aligned for the best sunlight exposure? Sometimes simply changing their positions or planting short things away from tall things can help.

**Water:** Where’s your source and is your hose easy to use? Consider changing your garden layout to make it easier, and therefore more likely, that you’ll water it more often.

**Location limitations:** Shade trees too near? Neighbor’s fence too tall? HOA rules?

**Step 2: Define your objectives for your garden.**
How much time can you devote to your garden? Do you enjoy working in the garden? Do you have help?

Do you want to focus on vegetable production? Flowers? Both?

What kind of garden spaces do you want? To accommodate children? Older folks? Relaxation and entertaining?

Lights or a water feature?

Do you have pets that need boundaries and barriers?

What’s your garden budget?
Step 3: Evaluate your existing plants.
What’s already growing: both things you planted and “volunteers”?

Do you have: perennials (like asparagus, herbs, flowers), extended season plants (like greens and pansies that can be mulched to over-winter), and annuals (like beans, lettuce, tomatoes, marigolds, petunias)?
Which of these do you want to grow again next year?

Any invasives to pull out (like ivy, poison ivy, mile-a-minute weed, morning glory, ragweed)?

Are there plants you want to limit but not lose (mint, chrysanthemums)?

Are shrubs and trees located well? Consider trimming these or even moving them in the fall or early spring if they’re a manageable size, to help maximize your available gardening space.

To help you enjoy and learn from this year’s garden, here’s more information:
University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center http://extension.umd.edu/hgic
Brooklyn Botanical Garden http://www.bbg.org/gardening

For more information about the Frederick County Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, visit : http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county/home-gardening or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596.
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