

In the Garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



Forcing tulips and daffs; see more photos inside, along with everything you need to know to start composting NOW

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Though it doesn't feel like it, act like it's spring!

I know, I know, it hardly feels like spring. But I can say with certainty 'tis the season and we had better be doing our garden chores whenever the weather permits. Before you know it'll be May and our gardens need to be in good shape with flowers in bloom and vegetables underway.

To this end, the peony stakes are in place, the lawn reseeded, and I've begun my regular weed patrol. The maple seeds and crabgrass are coming up rather too nicely. I've been indulging in full war against them. So far, I'm winning but I know that it is only a matter of time. Weeds are pernicious and they band together very effectively to be the bane of all gardeners. For now, I dash outside right after a rainfall and strike while the soil is moist and surrenders the weeds easily.

The window boxes and other spring flowers are coming along charmingly. I just wish the weather would grant me more time to sit and enjoy their beauty.

Get with the program, start a compost pile now!

The compost pile is looking rather full and happy now that it is being tended to more regularly. For the feeling of being virtuous and correct, there is nothing to beat using one's homemade compost. Anyone out there who has not experienced this feeling is sadly missing out. Get with the program! Start a compost bin right away. It is simple. I told you how last year.

A good, well maintained composter does not smell or attract curious animals. Truly, there are no more excuses for not making compost. Even apartment dwellers have worm bins for taking care of kitchen scraps.

Expanding the vegetable garden in new found space

Remember when I said I'd find a way to expand my vegetable garden? Well, I have. With three other families, work is in progress to create our own community garden. Each family will have a nice space in which to grow whatever vegetables they desire. We will share a bed of assorted herbs, a compost bin and, in an additional plot, the children will grow pumpkins. Next week, I'll write more about the making of this garden. I bet you can't wait.

Creating a nest wreath with my daughter

In this season of renewal and rebirth, my daughter and I have a tradition that I would like to share with you. We make a nesting wreath, which is easy and so inexpensive to make. Taking a plain grapevine wreath, we adorn it with pieces of string, raffia, ribbon, moss and feathers. We also stick in hay, slender twigs and such. The material is attached so as to make it convenient for birds to remove and use in nest building. The finished product is pretty and it is so much fun to watch the birds help themselves to the goodies.

Of course, hang this wreath somewhere in the garden so the feathered ones will notice it. Remember, it is crucial to use only natural, biodegradable material. No polyester or plastic. Also, no ribbons with wire in them as they can injure the birds. Just keep it simple. If you have a large property, make

several. Make a party of it and have each child create a wreath to take home. In my experience, adults take as much pleasure in this project as the children. Enjoy the season and the many joys it offers.

Shobha Vanchiswar has been gardening all her life, the last 19 years in Chappaqua. She received the Golden Trowel Award for garden design in 2007 from Garden Design magazine. Her jewel-of-a-garden here in New Castle was on view in last year's Garden Conservancy Open Day program. She has a garden design business, Seeds of Design. Write her at seedsofdesign@verizon.net.





