

There Is No “Right Way” to Garden

Loree Bohl (danger garden) for the 2022 NWF&G Festival

I call the garden rules, handed down by so-called experts, the Gardening Commandments. However, there is no single way to approach making a garden. Rather than following the Gardening Commandments without question, I encourage you to consider the knowledge on which they're based, then evaluate that information by filtering it through your own personal experience and garden conditions. Decide which rules you want to follow, and which ones you want to bend or break. Remember that many of these ideas aren't hard facts; they're simply popular opinions. (note: also included are any plant names that shared in the talk)

Commandment: Thou shalt leave thy leaves

Magnolia macrophylla leaves | In the gravel: Yucca rostrata, Agave ovatifolia and A. parryi 'JC Raulston'

Commandment: Thou shalt remove thy leaves

Helleborus x ballardiae Pink Frost | NOID hellebore

Commandment: Thou shalt plan the entire garden before you begin to plant

Magnolia macrophylla, Nolina hibernica 'La Siberica'

Commandment: Thou shalt create garden borders with curves

Commandment: Thou shalt create pathways whereby two may pass

Commandment: Thou shalt not purchase plants on impulse

Albizia julibrissin 'Summer Chocolate' (mimosa tree) | Yucca rostrata 'Sapphire Skies'

Commandment: Thou shalt embrace fall planting

Echium wildpretii, "tower of jewels" | Trachycarpus fortunei 'Wagnerianus'

Commandment: Thou shalt plant in groups of three or five, never one

Yucca rostrata, Agave ovatifolia, Arctostaphylos x 'Austin Griffiths'

Commandment: Thou shalt keep thy front yard for lawn and thy back yard for thy garden

Commandment: Thou shalt plant only meek plants in thy front garden

Tetrapanax papyrifer, rice paper plant | Agave ovatifolia and friends

Commandment: Thou shalt not behold two variegated plants in thy garden in a single glance

Fatsyhedera lizei 'Annemieke' / Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'

Commandment: Thou shalt not cultivate weeds

Verbascum bombyciferum | Verbascum bombyciferum 'Arctic Summer' / V. olympicum

Commandment: Thou shalt group plants with similar needs

Agave ovatifolia 'Frosty Blue', Symphytum x uplandicum 'Axminster Gold' (in the ground)

Commandment: Thou shalt not kill a healthy plant

Grevillea miqueliana / Magnolia laevifolia

Commandment: Thou shalt not covet a tree too large for thy garden

Paulownia tomentosa | Cotinus 'Royal Purple' / Sambucus nigra 'Eva'

Commandment: Thou shalt fear the unpruned shrubs, for they shall rule the world

Jasminum nudiflorum / Yucca filamentosa / Arbutus unedo

Commandment: Thou shalt not reuse thy potting soil

Commandment: Thou shalt always repot plants into larger containers

Agave utahensis var. eborispina / Echinofossulocactus

The original rule breakers:

Ruth Bancroft, creator of the Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek, California (ruthbancroftgarden.org)

Madame Ganna Walska, creator of Lotusland in Montecito, California (lotusland.org)

Stay in touch...

Blog: danger garden... thedangergarden.com

Book: Fearless Gardening; Be Bold, Break the Rules, and Grow What You Love from Timber Press <https://www.workman.com/products/fearless-gardening/paperback>

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