

Garden Journaling

By Katie Geist, CSU Teller County Master Gardener and Mark J. Platten, CSU Extension Director, Teller County

With the arrival of autumn's cooler days and nights, most of us are now putting our gardens to bed. Like me, you probably had some successes and failures in your garden this summer. And, by the time spring rolls around, you'll probably have forgotten many of the details about what happened in your garden this season.

A garden journal is a great tool to prevent repeating mistakes and ensures more garden successes. Your journal will be a personal record, specific to your property, including what you like to grow and your own gardening style. What did you learn and what do you want to do, try, or change during the next growing season? Ideally you'll record the entire season starting with the planning in January through harvesting in September. You can use a calendar, notebook, index cards or one of the many online templates. Keeping your journal simple will make it easier to stick with it. Here are some ideas of what to record in your journal:

- When you started seeds and planted outside
- Weather information such as daily temperatures, the first and last frost dates, rainfall and snow amounts
- Names of what you planted, including plant labels or seed packets
- Garden expenses and receipts
- Nurseries and catalogs used
- What did the deer, voles, prairie dogs, etc. eat, or not eat
- Sketches of your property and garden areas
- Photos of your garden to show the growing stages
- Vegetable plantings and harvest information
- Garden problems and any solutions you tried
- Garden tips and ideas for the next season
- Your wish list – plants, tools, landscaping

My gardens expanded this summer with the addition of an inexpensive greenhouse, more plants in my rock garden and a new flower bed unprotected from the wildlife. I had successful seed starting with zinnias, penstemon and peppers but found that I needed a much earlier start with geraniums. The greenhouse was a learning experience through the entire season. My cool season crop should have been started earlier and I learned the door could not be left open to cool the greenhouse. A neighborhood bunny ate all my lettuce, arugula and spinach and then my puppy ate two pepper plants! The deer have nibbled a few plants in my new flower bed and have left others alone such as yarrow and Russian sage. Ground squirrels have pulled the

lupines and poppies from the rock garden but haven't touched the penstemon or catmint. Both gardens will have more penstemon next year.

Since my memory needs all the help it can get, I've decided that a garden journal is the best way to prevent repeating mistakes and learning from my gardening journey. Hopefully it will help you too. Happy journaling!

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." George Santayana.

For questions regarding produce, landscape, and horticulture questions; please call our growline at 686-7980 or visit our website at www.co.teller.co.us/csu