



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article February 16, 2016

In or Out? The Necessity of Culling

by Lydia Holley

Do you dream of a beautiful garden? Do you look at garden photos and wish your garden was just as pretty? Sometimes, it is not what is included, rather what is excluded that makes the difference.

For instance, I love roses. But I only love roses that do well for me. I am much too lazy to spray, and my ladybugs and frogs have thanked me for that. If I have a rose that looks particularly ugly, I take it out. I give a pass to an occasional bout of blackspot, but complete defoliation is unacceptable to me.



It is the same with other plants. I have tried several types of conifers that have ended up looking scraggly and tip-burned. It was not the fault of these conifers, they were just not happy in our Texas heat. It was fun trying something different, but I knew that there would be a chance of failure as well as the chance of success.

Look around your garden. Take note of the plants that mar that picture perfect vision in your mind's eye. If that plant consistently looks bad, consider replacing it. I know it can feel brutal. As gardeners, we like to nurture and grow plants, not kill them. But you will never achieve the beautiful garden you desire if you keep plants that are not contributing to that picture.

Instead of digging up and killing the offending plants, you may want to try growing them in containers for a while, giving them away, or just moving them to a location with better growing conditions for that particular plant. Be honest about how the plant has performed for you, to yourself as well as to anyone you give it to.

Do not rush to judgement, however. Give each plant two to three years, possibly more, to determine whether a plant is on the naughty list. It may take that long for a plant to mature or grow accustomed to your garden. Some plants mature more slowly than others. Knowing whether you need to keep a plant longer can save you money, and can add to your garden's vision. I once kept a tea rose for five years before it enchanted me. Old garden tea roses are notorious for maturing slowly. Now, it is one of the most beautiful plants in my garden. Most plants, however, will not need that much time for you to make a decision on its contribution to your garden's vision.

There are several plants that I am considering removing from my garden this year. Look around your garden with a critical eye. Then determine if you, too, need to cull a plant or two. Sometimes, it is the only way that the dream can become a reality.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.