



Creating a Remembrance Garden
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We are in the midst of a most joyful season! Holiday cards have evolved into yearly snapshots of a vast photo diary that allow me to stay connected with my friends and family from a distance and I relish each and every envelope when it arrives. It is also the time of year when I feel deeply the loss of friends and loved ones who are no longer with us. Memories of these beloved people resonate in the hand-stitched tissue box covers and homemade decorations that I unpack every year. These moments of remembrance embody a soothing sadness and healing peace for me. This year I find myself wanting to remember these precious moments throughout the year, not just around the holidays.

One way to accomplish this goal is to create a remembrance garden. There is no official manual of how to do this because each garden is uniquely personalized; however I think there are several main ideas that can be used to create a place that helps you recall your precious moments.

First of all, decide on a purpose and the atmosphere of the garden. What do you want to experience when you visit the garden? Some prefer quiet and solitude while others seek to commune with others in their remembrance. What do you want the garden to highlight about the person(s) you are honoring? Consider hobbies, favorite things and the personality of the honored person. Will your garden be bright and cheery, or shaded and calming?

Next consider the size of the garden, and it follows, the location. Place the garden where you can easily see it from a window or seating area. In the absence of reasonable outdoor space, use window boxes or decorative planters and pots to create a garden for small indoor or outdoor spaces. Something as simple as tying a ribbon around a small potted plant and placing it on a desk or windowsill can create the perfect recollection. Or pick a favorite spot that your loved one enjoyed visiting, say overlooking a pond or valley, and create a garden, or plant something there (like a tree), or place a statue or plaque there in his/her memory.

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Once you know the location of the garden you can tackle plant selection. The amount of sun present, soil type, drainage, and temperature of course will determine which plants will thrive in your garden, but you can also choose plants based on other factors. Favorite plants of the honored person are often used and also plants with the same name (black-eyed Susan, sweet William), inspirational names (“Peace” rose, guardian angel hosta), or plants associated with certain months (akin to birthstones). Colors can represent favorite colors, color patterns (such as red, white and blue flowers for a veteran), or convey special meaning (i.e., violet for devotion and love, or yellow for wisdom and intelligence). Fragrances are often powerfully associated with certain memories and can be used to remember those moments or to embellish the desired atmosphere of the garden.

Use hardware, statues, art (a photograph sealed in a waterproof frame, for example) and/or a water feature to adorn your garden. Climbing plants like wisteria or ivy trained up and over an arbor fashions an elegant accent for seating options like a bench or chair so you can comfortably enjoy the space. For smaller or indoor remembrance gardens, use small statues or trinkets that represent your honored person(s) to ornament pots or window boxes.

This holiday season, my favorite tissue box cover is displayed in its usual place, right next to the phone. And I have placed a small toy goldfish in the pot of a bonsai plant, wrapped the pot with a wide yellow ribbon and placed it next to our Christmas tree, where I will see it often and remember a good friend.

Keep in mind that it is not the ideal time to plant a new garden outside in El Dorado County! It is a good time, however, to create an indoor remembrance garden or to draft a plan for your outdoor one using the above ideas for guidance. Enjoy the creativity involved and fond memories that emerge as you plan your personal space.

Join UCCE Master Gardener Steve Savage at this Saturday’s free public education class: Trees and Shrubs in the Foothills. Basic landscape concepts and how to get started with trees and shrubs that survive in the foothills will be discussed. Drought-tolerant perennials and ground covers will be emphasized. The December 6th, 2014 three-hour class begins at 9:00 a.m. at the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building, 311 Fair Lane, Placerville.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at the office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardener website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners/ and you can also find us on Facebook.