

Record Keeping to Suit You

By Andrea Ray Chandler, Olathe GOA

Record keeping probably sounds like a compilation of statistics by some really Type-A gardener. It can be, if that's what you want. What record-keeping does for the common, laid-back gardener is simply to jog the overstuffed brain.

You *think* that you'll remember all the kinds of things next year:

That you need to get the lettuces in earlier, but plant only half as many,
The name of that incredible rose you'd like to plant as a family memorial,
When it really was warm enough to put out the peppers.

Unfortunately, few of us have computer-like memories, especially once you've gardened for more than a single year. There are several ways to keep records, depending on your temperament.

CALENDAR METHOD

Some folks just jot notes on the calendar: "Seeded carrots", "Hail storm", "Carrots are sprouting". If your calendar is like mine and is full of appointments, then you'll need another one just for the garden. When you seeded, the variety, the sprouting and harvesting times are important to note here. This might be easier kept next to your tool rack the in the garage [with the pen on a string], rather than in some kitchen drawer.

NOTEBOOK METHOD

A simple spiral-bound notebook has a particular appeal for the casual gardener who doesn't take notes every day. In addition to the same kind of information put on the calendar, it allows you to put in other miscellaneous, but real information, such as when the toddler first said, "Peal!" after munching down on a Sugarsnap. Charts are handy for marking where something was planted, so you can rotate crops and prevent disease problems and nutrient deficiencies.

Don't forget to stay on top of those journal entries!

VARIETAL METHOD

Some folks prefer to staple or glue the seed packet [if it's empty] to a sheet of notebook paper, and keep tabs on each variety: when it was planted, how well it grew, how much was harvested.

This kind of notebook keeping allows you to track the performance of different varieties. You can also clip in maps of your garden, brochures and fliers with growing information, those little picture labels that came with plants, and so on.

Andrea Ray Chandler is a lifetime member of TGOA/MGCA and former editor of the Olathe GOA's "Horticultural Highlights". Chandler received the national Golden Quill Award in 1999 for her writing ability; her publications appear in numerous national

magazines. In addition to being a mom, volunteer and lecturer, Chandler is a full-time student working on a degree in Horticultural Science.

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