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## **Garden Journaling** with Lorene Edwards Forkner

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### **Chapter 1 - Garden Journaling**

#### Overview

- I am a gardener. Creating a garden is like being inside a work of art as it's growing around you. I paint with plants, I can sculpt the landscape, and I choreograph experiences that roll out throughout every month of the year. (lighthearted music) Hi, my name is Lorene Edwards Forkner. There's a reciprocal tending that happens when you develop a relationship with the outdoor world and you take care of the garden, and the garden, in turn, feeds you. We are going to begin by collaging and dreaming up a garden that hits all our happy places, I'll show you how to create a simple garden plan with seasonal overlays that show your garden throughout the year, and we'll keep it all together in a garden journal. The world needs more gardeners. I've found my years in the garden to be transformative. Join me and develop a relationship with nature. (ambient music)

#### Materials

- I get a tremendous number of seed catalogs and garden journals or magazines that come to my house. We're going to create a collage from images taken out of that that kind of explore our garden intentions. For that, you'll need whatever magazines or catalogs you come up with, you can also print out pictures from your Pinterest boards, take pictures with your phone, and use those. To cut things up, you'll need scissors, a glue stick that will glue it down into our journal, as well as pencil or a Sharpie to make notes to yourself. We're going to look at a garden bubble design, very, very simple and basic. And for that, we'll have sketch paper, tracing paper overlays, a variety of colored pencils or brush pens, whatever you'd like to work with. Finally, I'll help you build a personal garden journal. I recommend these manila envelopes where you can stash seed packets, or seed tags, you can tape them in so that everything is included. And I've included a garden log sheet that you can download with your course materials where you can keep track of things going on in your garden.

#### Blooming collage

- A garden journal can be both a powerful inspirational tool, a creative scrapbook, where you hold all your dreams, whether they're imaginary or actual plans for your backyard, it can also be very practical, where you record things that worked, things that didn't work. We're gonna start with a collage, which is so fun, it's more like paper dolls when you were a kid. So I've taken a bunch of, again, those magazines, pulled out anything that appealed to me. And on this level, I keep it very light. It's like, do I like it? Does this do something for me? I don't try and worry if it actually would work in my garden, I just try and see what is it like? You can start your garden journal by maybe decorating the cover. I've put these beautiful photographs that I pulled out of a magazine and I somehow, in a perfect world, found make backyard dreams a reality, which is always the notion that kind of includes what you're dreaming of, but also what gets down in the dirt and actually makes it happen. You've pulled out all the things that make you happy, sort them into like categories. So my categories are winter, I wrote here, "Winter is a season too." So these are all images of plants that would be in my winter garden. Early spring bulbs come right at a time when you're most thirsty for color and life, new life in the garden. So it's fun to make some imaginary combinations there. I love fragrance, so I'm always trying to, what are some more fragrant plants that I can introduce to the

garden? And finally, I have this dream that someday I might have a rose garden, and I have a friend who has given me a list of all the roses that she grows in her garden, and I don't want to lose this, I want to keep it someplace. And the garden journal is the perfect place where I know where I'll be able to find it. Now we're going to do our own collage. And for me, I've selected these images and I love and adore clipped boxwood orbs. It's not for everybody, it is a maintenance chore. But I also found this photograph of stoneware orbs. So you might want a sculpture in your garden, or you may love the idea of doing topiary. That's me, I love that. Hydrangeas are a wonderful, long blooming season, a shrub that is very durable in the garden. I always am reminding myself that foliage is a plant too, and that how you combine and mix textures and colors of foliage is a very important part of a successful garden. But I'm gonna lay these down, these really appeal to me. Now, I have a very small backyard garden, city size, and I always point out there's a house in it. So I like this meadowy look, the grasses, but it's got some structure in it too. The colorful annuals. Here's another one. I think the thing that I like most about this image, again, it's a meadow, it's got the perennials in the grasses, but that beautiful light slanting into it. And meadows and grasses have so much movement. And then finally, again, with the summer bulbs, alliums are fabulous, they're not only architectural and beautiful in the garden, they match that orb shape that I'm so fond of. But pollinators love them, and they very reliably return year after year. So this might be my summer spread, and it kind of tells me that I would like to go with some grasses that I want to play up to the light of summer to include plants for pollinators. And then there's plenty of things here for cutting and taking indoors as well. Starting a new garden or even tending a garden that's been going for years can be a little bit overwhelming at times. So this is a great project to do in the wintertime where you can just let your imagination go free and play. So this is the way to do it. You can make pages and pages in your journal and then look back and see what it reveals about what your preferences are, what you might like. Whether I actually plant a meadow or just plant a few grasses that give me the inspiration or the feeling of a meadow, it doesn't have to be very literal, but it can be both a playful exercise as well as point you in the direction you want to go for your personal garden.

#### Simple garden plan with seasonal overlays

- Now comes the fun part. We get to take our garden dreams and put them on paper that might actually become the space that you go to in your backyard. So I'm gonna talk about a space I have in my garden, and I'm just going to use bubbles. I'm not a landscape architect or a designer, but bubbles will tell us where something is. I have an evergreen hedge, and I want to design a garden in front of it that not only sets off the colors of the plants, but also performs in every season of the year. Again, I'm from the Pacific Northwest. We don't have reliable snow cover, and so I want my garden to look good, even if it's through a window. So how about, you know, I showed in my garden journal that witch hazels bloom all summer long, so would love to have a witch hazel. We talked about hydrangeas. Having some substantive plants that are gonna be there, they're not gonna go completely dormant down to the soil, is important. They call it the bones of the garden. Here's my beautiful little round clipped boxwood. And then I'm going to have some grasses, I'm going to have some heathers, these beautiful flowers right here and on this plant right here is a heather or a heath. These are fabulous plants. They're drought-tolerant and they bloom, some bloom in the winter, some bloom in the spring, fall, summer. I mean, you can always have a heather in bloom. So it's a great addition into your garden mix. And the foliage is evergreen besides. So this is a mess, but here is a version that I have finalized a little bit or just tightened up. Make as many of the rough drawings,

the rough bubbles as you want, and you'll start to see where you're going with that. When you do finally end up with it, tighten it up, maybe ink it in with your pen so that you have a base plan that you can work from. I took a brush pen and added in the pieces of this imaginary garden that are evergreen, so I know what that's going to be doing all year round. I also made a layer where I actually identified what the plants are. Now, this could be something down the road, maybe work with your local independent nursery person to say, well, this is what's good in your garden, in your space, in your exposure. But here's my crabapple or a witch hazel. Here's a hydrangea. Here is my boxwood orb. I'd like a water feature. I think water is a wonderful element to include in the garden because it attracts so much wildlife. So this is a key that you can refer to whenever you're tending your plants. And they might change. You might say that, "Oh, I don't want a witch hazel. I'm gonna have a crabapple because a crabapple has actually more seasons of interest even than a witch hazel." I've taped a piece of tracing paper over the top of my base plan, and now I'm going to color in using pencils and couple of brush pens what this is going to look like in summer. So first of all, I'm gonna start by just indicating my evergreen hedge, like the furniture of the garden. Here's my boxwood orb. Here are the heathers, which, again, are evergreen throughout the year, but have different bloom times. I've also got plenty of ground cover in this garden simply because that's like the carpet. Your garden is a series of layers that you're furnishing from the canopy right down to the ground. So it might be a finishing touch, but it's important to think about it from real early on. So these are evergreen ground covers. This is what my plants are going to look like in summertime. I've decided on a crabapple because it has more interest all through the summer. And by summertime, it's going to have these beautiful green leaves. And the fruits are starting, but they're not yet ripe. So they're just these little lime green kind of baby crabapples. My hydrangea over here is going to be starting to go into beautiful bloom with those sky blue flowers. And they have, because foliage is a part of every garden, it has green leaves as well. The perennials that I've chosen to put on either side here are a sort of hardy geranium. It's not the window box geranium that you're used to in summer with the big red flowers or brilliant colors, but the hardy geranium, this one blooms all summer long, from early June all the way into fall until we get our first hard frost. And it has a beautiful kind of purple, purpley-blue bloom on it. So it's a lovely repeating color of your hydrangea, but it's also this lush, soft kind of carpeting perennial. Mounds to about a foot tall maybe, and like I said, blooms incessantly, in a good way. So this is my water feature. Like I said, it attracts wildlife. You might even want to make it into a burbling fountain, a recirculating fountain. Those are all things that your various nursery people can help you with. And then this plant that I have in here is a form of hummingbird mint, which of course we want because we want hummingbirds, but it comes up with spires of kind of orangey apricot and pink blossoms all summer long. So I'm just drawing a hint of what those colors are because that will tell me that's the hummingbird mint. And then, of course, because I want my meadow, which I showed here, and I've got a little tiny space of it, but that doesn't mean I can't include some large grasses. That will give me that atmosphere of a meadow. Grasses are also a great way to catch the light in the garden. They also have some movement to them. I'm a big fan of ornamental grasses. So these up front are smaller ones. Then it's kind of that continuity of one grass to another, repeating a shape, repeating a form to create my little imaginary meadow. This down here is an area of gravel, just because, again, it's another way to cover the ground. You can also plant various plants that come up through the gravel. And in the summertime, my heather, so these heathers bloom in the wintertime, this heather right here blooms in the summer. So it has these lovely, well, kind of that pinky-purple, lavender. But anyway, it has color on it. If my ground cover thymes, they will also have some pink flowers in the

summertime. And another plant, because I love to plant for pollinators as well as that kind of wildness look to it, this is a plant called *verbena bonariensis*, which is sometimes called Peruvian verbena. It has a tall, narrow stalk with little clusters of flowers at the top. Butterflies love it. It's so narrow of a footprint, it can come up through other plants like your grasses. So I'm gonna just scatter those throughout the garden for that very loosened up, non-formal look. The formalest I get is my evergreen backdrop and my clipped orb. So if I put this back on there, I can see, well, here's my evergreen hedge, here's my hydrangea, this is a geranium, here's my hummingbird mint, heather, a water feature, little bit of gravel, and the ground cover. So this is a good way to key back to what you've done. My garden in the Pacific Northwest is a four season garden. I'm passionate about being in the garden. I want to interact with it in every month of the year. To illustrate what's going on in the garden in every season, I've created tissue overlays that I can put over my base plan. This will show what to expect in the garden in the winter. So I know that my crabapple will be bare, doesn't have any fruit on it or anything, just the stems, as is the hydrangea, which gives me a tremendous amount of space under those two canopies to plant in lots and lots of crocus, get that winter pop of color starting. In my garden it's in late January, early February. My winter heathers are going to be in bloom, starting probably in November and running through March. My beautiful orb is just doing its little evergreen self. And then the water feature, especially in the winter, the birds love being able to come in and get some water. The heathers I said are blooming. And then you can see there's not a whole lot else going on, but it's winter, and your garden can, you know, it's okay to have a quiet season in the garden. By spring, I like to go wild with color. So I have introduced a very thick layer of spring bulbs. These are plants that are going to come up where there's nothing right now. This is in early spring, so most of the garden is still dormant. But I can introduce a lot of interest by daffodils underneath the hydrangea, in and among the grasses in the garden that I've put in. And you see my heathers are still blooming for well into spring, and then the crabapple is going to come into bloom. So it's going to have numerous pink and white flowers all over the crabapple, and the lime green new foliage is going to be coming out. Moving back into the summer one that I just did, we can see where things really start to mature. The geraniums are flowering, the hummingbird mint. This is the *verbena bonariensis* that I talked about. Now my summer heather is blooming, the hydrangea is doing its beautiful blue, which picks up all the colors of the other hardy geranium. Then back over to fall, I can keep the interest going by selecting plants that have more than one season of interest. So the crabapple, by fall, the fruits are ripening to these, you know, little one inch ruby red fruits, at the same time that the flowers or that the foliage is changing to kind of a golden fall color. The hydrangeas, the blue flowers have ripened to like a deep maroon or wine color, so that's a nice look, and the light is changing. The light in the fall is more from an angle and it's a very golden. So that's when the grasses really come into their own, and the light going through them that I talked about that was so important to me. The ground covers and the geraniums will keep doing their things, hummingbird mint. So you can see by plotting for four seasons of interest with the very same plants, there's not a lot of changing out or doing anything else. Once I get those plants planted, the bulbs planted, they will return every year. And you can get a very dynamic, interesting space in the garden throughout the entire year. So this approach could be used for a small garden space, a larger garden space, or even a container where you can capture all four seasons depending on your plant choices.

#### Garden logbook

- I like to say a formula for a successful garden is one that involves inspiration and perspiration. So

we've talked a lot about imagining and kind of creating dream boards of what we want our garden to look like. We've translated it possibly into some scenarios what it might look like planted in the ground, and now when it gets into the busy season, when spring and summer are actually underway, life speeds up in the garden and it's all you can do to kind of just keep up with tending your plants. That is where my garden log book comes in. This is a series of questions and prompts that you can record. You can do it every week. You can do it once a month. You can, whatever it is. This is your personal garden journal that's going to be for your purposes, so you can create whatever you want. The PDF download included in the course material is what I use to talk about my garden. The first page of my garden journal slash scrapbook is this beautiful camellia, red and white. It just is stunning. It gets my attention every single time. And then I put in the word play because I want to remind myself that this is a playful, joyful activity. It's a relationship in a garden between the gardener and the piece of land that they're working. The envelope that I have on the inside of my front cover is where I stash packets of seed that I want to be planting. Several years ago, I started growing this sky blue morning glory and it's magic. So I wanna remind myself. I have another place where I store seed, but these are the ones that I wanna prioritize. It keeps it in front of me if I refer to that. I even wrote inspiration and perspiration. But the meat of the log book is this form, you know, the things that are important to a gardener and a garden, a successful garden, is the weather. It's like, where are you? Where is your place? What is it doing outside? And then keeping track like, what did I plant? Did I put the bulbs there? Did I sow my morning glories there? I like to keep track of kind of a seasonal bloom. You're dating these log sheets so you can look back and say, oh yeah, the year that I grew those morning glories, they didn't even start blooming in Seattle until September. I was expecting them much earlier. But that informs me moving forward, what to expect in later years. I also have a space on my log sheet to remind myself, literally says, note to self. And that's where I've written things like, don't forget to save the fava bean seed for planting next year. One of my favorite plants is a crimson floured fava bean, and it's sometimes hard for me to get the seed. So if I remind myself to not eat them all, then I'll have that seed to plant next year. Another envelope at the back of my journal is where I put tags that I loved of those plants. Last summer, I grew this petunia that just bloomed for months and months and months. I would never remember which petunia out of millions of petunias if I hadn't kept the tags. So just as important as saving those seeds that I want to work with or those plant tags that I'm looking for is saving what I liked in the past. I also, when I am making these notes to myself, that might be where I put, morning glory didn't bloom until September, or this plant was a dud. Don't bother growing that again. And then the discoveries. I always, like every season, I've been gardening my entire life, but every year I'm learning something new. I just thought it would be fun to remind myself. There's always that point in August where it's like, I don't wanna keep watering, I don't wanna keep doing this. It's like drudgery. But I can look back at my garden journal and say, oh, look how excited you were at that point. Look how that there are new discoveries still to be made. This is a log sheet from a couple of summers ago when we had a ridiculous heat wave in Seattle that was way outside of our norm. And I feel like as our climate is changing, it's going to be more and more important that we keep track of these seasonal things. Because when our temperatures went up to 114 degrees, which is about 30 degrees warmer than usual, this is going to keep happening. So to see a pattern in that. Also, when it gets that hot, you don't wanna do anything. That's a good time to work on your garden journal. On the other hand, in the wintertime when I'm dying for something to plant or something to show up in the garden, I can remind myself spring bulbs are planted in the fall. If I make a note to myself in the fall that's like, plant lots more bulbs. Winter pansies are a great

companion plant to put in with your bulbs, and hydrangeas are at their best when they have that real burnished kind of wine colored blooms in the fall. I put a note to myself that bulb vendors that I'm ordering my bulbs from, typically ship bulbs to the Pacific Northwest last. We are the last people to get our orders, which means I will be out planting in the garden in November. And finally, notes and discoveries. This one, I put leave the seed heads standing in the garden because it's so much fun to watch the birds as they feed off of them throughout the winter. Let's fill out a log sheet for that spring garden that we just designed together. I'm going to look at that drawing that we made. So this is the garden in spring. I'm going to, so let's say March. I'm going to assume that the weather is what it's always doing in March, which is raining. I can count on blooms are going to be crocus. The daffodils, these lovely spring bulbs that don't mind if it's raining all the time. The heathers, I mean, heathers really earn their keep when they start blooming in February and have so much beautiful flowers on them, as well as that dark green foliage. They also make a great backdrop to the blooming bulbs. This is also a good time to make notes of what you see blooming in the garden, that you might want to increase the numbers for the following year. So maybe I'll make a note to myself to buy more crocus, buy more crocus to plant in the fall so that next spring can be even more of a floral carpet. The discovery, I always feel like you know, this might be where you record your last frost date. That's kind of a seasonal bookend that determines a lot of what's going on in your garden. So maybe my last frost date was March 23rd is typical. And then what I'm planting, it just depends on what I'm finding at the nursery. All sorts of plants follow me home, but maybe I'm starting to think of the vegetable garden and I need to start my fava beans. I need to, hopefully by March it's time to plant my sweet peas into the garden. Your collages that you made, your garden plan that you dreamt up, and these log sheets all live in your garden journal. It's important that you have it in a place where you can refer to. And honestly, that inspiration is gonna get you through a lot of the perspiration of heavy garden season. You can keep your log sheets either tucked into the envelope in the front with your seed packets, or you can tip them in to the journal itself by taping it. You'll find a tremendous amount of information and resources about the garden online or in books at your library, at the bookstores. But what it all comes down to is what's going to happen in your backyard or in your garden area. Gardening is local. It's, what grows in my garden may not grow in your garden. You may be able to grow something that I only dream of, like a Meyer lemon tree. So knowing and referring to your local resources is a really important step to being successful. Talk to your nursery people. Talk to your your neighbors. Ask them for advice. Gardeners love to give advice. And then you're going to write it all down in your garden journal, which you can refer to looking backwards, looking forwards. A well used garden journal, it becomes a scrapbook of past gardens. It becomes a tool for managing the current growing season and a repository for putting your garden dreams for the future.