Grow your own bouquets

Have you ever dreamed of having a cutting garden right outside your door?

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Just imagine grabbing the cutting shears, a container of water and maybe a cup of coffee for lingering in the garden amongst all the beautiful flowers. Follow a few of my ground rules and you can make it a reality in your own backyard.

Start by locating your bed where it will receive at least six to eight hours of sunlight daily, and near a source of water. A bed three feet wide and ten feet long will produce enough flowers and fragrant foliage for a couple of bouquets a week.

The secret to success is in the soil: opening the soil and adding organic matter allows air, water, worms and roots to roam freely in your bed — exactly what you want. And be sure to add slow-release organic fertilizer during preparation.

Growing "cut-flower variety" flowers lends another hand to easy success. This mix of garden work-horses will produce gorgeous flowers all season long when cut weekly: Benary's Giant Zinnias, Celosia Pampas Plume and Cockscombs, Pro-Cut Sunflowers and Mrs. Burn's Lemon Basil.

Now for the golden ground rule: you must treat it like a cutting garden! To keep your bed working, harvest every week on a regular basis even if you don't need flowers. The first time you skip cutting your bed is the beginning of the end of your cutting garden. Cutting on a regular schedule keeps your bed in tip-top shape and keeps your plants constantly producing new flowers, the true secret to a great cutting garden! Prepare well, plant smart, cut often and you will be on your way to a summer filled with oodles of beautiful bouquets.

Garden because you can! For more on planting, caring for and harvesting your cutting garden, go online and visit: www.shoptgw.com. ■