

Gardeners' tastes in garden magazines are as varied as their gardens. I must admit that I am a garden magazine junkie. Here are a few of the magazines I've tried and what I feel is their strength and weakness (if any). Be gentle to your pocketbook or wallet though and try them out at the library first.

"Garden Design" is quite schmaltzy. I think I first bought it because of its exquisite covers. The inside was as appealing to the eye as the outside. My favorite section, however, was the history section. If you aspire to garden design you might enjoy this magazine. Beware, though, many of the suggestions are for east coast gardens.

Taunton Press offers two magazines for gardeners, "Kitchen Gardener" and "Fine Gardening." I subscribed to "Fine Gardening" for several years. Its format is actually quite textbook-like. I devoured every word and punctuation mark, not to mention the photographs. However, much of the writing today seems quite stilted. (Remember this is only my opinion.) I also find it quite pricey. "Kitchen Gardener" on the other hand seems more reader friendly. It contains an abundance of information about gardening with vegetables and herbs. The recipes that accompany the growing tips are quite tasty; I've tried them. This is one of my favorite magazines to buy for a treat to myself. Taunton publications are quite pricey at \$5.95 each.

"Horticulture" magazine once intimidated me. After all, it used those botanically correct Latin names. Yikes! But put on your badge of courage and dig in to this magazine. It has great illustrations and very reader-friendly articles and information. One of my favorite parts of the magazine is the section giving recommendations on books to read. "Horticulture" retails for \$4.95. You can visit their website at www.hortmag.com. Who knows, maybe those botanic names will start tripping off your tongue.

"National Gardening" is a longstanding garden magazine put out by the National Gardening Association. Its website is www.garden.org. It's a very affordable magazine at \$2.95 per issue. Regular topics include: gardening questions, structures (things to build in your garden), and technique (how to prune, plant, divide etc.). My complaint with this magazine is that it seems to have much more space devoted to advertisements than text; and articles rarely reflect our maritime northwest climate. Having said that, there is a section with brief gardening tips for each region of the country. It's a fun magazine to pick up now and then.

My all time favorite for the buck is "Organic Gardening." This magazine went through a period of upheaval and inconsistency but now has its act back together. It is an excellent source of information and news in the world of organic gardening (or any gardening, for that matter). Look to it for information on stewardship of the earth plus really great gardening ideas and tips. Each issue also has an herb, vegetable or fruit recipe. Last but not least this magazine groups most of the ads at the back of the issue so you can nearly read a whole article page to page. Newsstand price is \$3.99. Visit their web site at www.organicgardening.com.

My sister gave me a subscription to "Rebecca's Garden" and it's one of my favorites. I'd watched Rebecca on HGTV several times and loved how she says, "Get those hands dirty," encouraging gardeners to get out there and play in the dirt. Visit the magazine website at www.rebeccasgarden.com. This is a very affordable magazine at \$2.95 per issue. It's packed with quick ideas, lots of photographs, only a few, always has a recipe, an adult gardening project and a project for kids. Each issue includes news from various areas of the United States. Valerie Easton reports each time for the Seattle area. This is an affordable, enjoyable, simple, yet useful magazine. It would especially be good for new or timid gardeners.

Last but not least find this small magazine (more like a newspaper) called "Northwest Garden News" at local nurseries and bookstores. It's a great publication and the best part is it's free. It has articles by local gardening gurus and includes a calendar of gardening events in our area. Be sure to find the most recent issue called "2000 Gardeners' Almanac." There is a month-by-month gardening guide that gives tips, tasks and planting ideas. Don't forget, this one's free.

When evaluating a magazine be sure to notice how much of the information is suitable for our climate and vegetation. Notice where it is published and where the authors of the articles live. It's always interesting to learn about other areas of the country but if you can't directly apply the information to your own garden you might want to reconsider spending your hard earned money on a publication.