

INTRODUCTION

Let's face it: There simply is no living thing on this planet that isn't saddled with a problem now and again—and that includes the plants in your yard. The good news is that armed with the tips, tricks, and tonics in this book, you can solve every single one of those troubles—and even have fun as you do it! These pages are filled to the gills with what my Grandma Putt used to call good old-fashioned grow-how that'll help you conquer conundrums, overcome obstacles, and head off garden-variety headaches in your yard—both large and small.

We'll start off in Part One with the crowning jewel of your landscape: a lush and lovely lawn. I'll show you how to turn a patch of problem-plagued grass—or a bare plot of ground—into emerald-green, toe-ticklin' turf in the blink of an eye. You'll also learn scads of simple secrets for feeding, weeding, watering, and mowing in the right ways and at the right times, so you can keep problems to a minimum. And when disaster does strike (as it does in even the best-tended lawns), the ammunition in this section will help you win the battle against pests, diseases—or unavoidable weather woes like drought or an overload of rain that just won't stop.

Part Two is all about fabulous flowering plants—including alluring annuals, peeper-popping perennials, bodacious bulbs, and ravishing roses. Whether you tend just a few simple window boxes or a yard full of mixed borders, the handy hints and ingenious ideas in this section will help keep your plants strong, healthy, and blooming to beat the band. You'll find all the firepower you need to prevent and solve problems ranging from poor soil and too little sun to all-out attacks from the bad-bug brigade and the dastardly disease hit squad.

Finally, in Part Three, we turn our attention to the plants that put food on our tables—namely vegetables and herbs. If you're among the increasing number of folks who are opting for homegrown food, you'll discover the

secrets to success right here. I'll share a boatload of time-tested tips and cutting-edge capers for turning out a steady stream of edibles that will supply the kind of flavor and nutrition that no shrink-wrapped store-bought produce can ever match.

NEIGHBORLY KNOW-HOW

But hold on to your hats—there's a whole lot more! In every chapter, you'll find fabulous features like **Neighborly Know-How**, which offers up savvy advice from gardeners who've fielded just about every kind of quandary that Mother Nature could toss their way. For example, you'll learn the single best way to ensure the future health of a new lawn you're starting from seed (page 30) and a no-fail way to avoid mistaking weed seedlings for vegetables (page 218). Plus, for all you folks who grow great big pots of annuals every summer, there's a quick, easy—and downright astounding—trick for refreshing the potting mix so you don't have the trouble and expense of replacing it each year (page 116).

Practical Problem Solvers provide exactly what the name implies: The straight-shooting, spot-on scoop about how to solve lawn and garden issues of all kinds in clever, offbeat ways. Sneak preview: Discover an unexpected source for some of the most nutritious plant foods of all—for free (page 49), learn a novel way to cut back on the time you spend watering container plants (page 112), and get wise to a foolproof trick that'll keep raccoons, groundhogs, and other like-size critters out of your vegetable garden—guaranteed (page 224)!

Practical Problem Solver



Jerry's Q & A provides no-holds-barred answers to questions from readers about the issues that affect lawn and garden tenders from coast to coast. Here, you just might find the solutions to some of your most annoying predicaments, including ugly snow mold, which can strike even the healthiest lawn (page 51), basil that refuses to perform (page 333), and an ultra-common dilemma with a super-simple solution: how to start the perennial garden of your dreams without breaking the bank (page 76).

In **What Would Grandma Putt Do?**, I pass along invaluable nuggets of gardening knowledge that I learned from this remarkable lady. Just to whet



your appetite, you'll learn the top-secret trick for making tuberous begonias produce blooms that are twice as big as your neighbors' (page 174), the guaranteed strategy for deterring European corn borers (page 286), and the absolutely no-fail way to predict when crabgrass seeds are just about to sprout in your lawn—so you can get them under control at exactly the right time (page 55).

Also, because the road to a stress-free lawn and garden begins with choosing plants that have the right stuff for the job at hand, each chapter includes a list of **Top 10 Problem-Solving Plants**. For example, the winners in Chapter 1 are “Drought-Tolerant Turfgrasses” (page 22). Chapter 4 zeroes in on flowers that attract throngs of insect-gobbling hummingbirds (page 85). And “Ornamental Crops” in Chapter 10 presents flavorful and nutritious vegetables that are beautiful enough to grace any planting bed (page 245).



Top 10 Problem-Solving Plants

Last but not least, these pages are packed with my **Fantastic Formulas**. My all-natural mixes are guaranteed to fend off dastardly diseases and pulverize pesky pests, get seeds and transplants off to a rip-roaring start—and simply make every plant in your yard grow stronger, healthier, and more beautiful. Just to give you an idea of the problem-solving power these tonics deliver, Paralyzing Pest Salsa (page 224) will sock it to any vegetable garden invader, but it's also so safe you could eat it—as long as you can stand the heat. Wild Weed Wipeout Tonic (page 57) will deliver a death blow to even the toughest trespassing plants. And Bulb Breakfast of Champions (page 161)

Fantastic Formula

gives you the healthiest, most beautiful blooming bulbs you could ever ask for.

In short, this book is your personal power-packed arsenal for vanquishing any issue that troubles your turfgrass, frustrates your flowers, or vexes your vegetables. So don't just stand there! Get ready, get set—grow!