



The constant gardeners

Whether they fancy a riot of dahlias, or a plot of plump, fresh strawberries, these five Rockland residents reveal their passion for planting.

BY BILL CARY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN SCHMITT

*G*ardens set the tone for a home. Whether you appreciate a nice patch of greenery from afar, or simply like to dig in your own, you have to admit to a little bit of house envy when you pass by a well-maintained landscape or an exclamation point of color. How, you wonder, do these homeowners do it? We, too, were curious, and so we went to the source: Rockland gardeners. These talented people, most of whom have been gardening for years, are—pardon the pun—embedded in the community. That is, you won't find them hidden behind tall fences, saving their best stuff for themselves. They're true neighbors, in the sense that, when it comes to "greenery insights," they are happy to share. Here, a peek into what makes them bloom.



**NOAH
SCHWARTZ**
CONGERS



YOU COULD SAY, NOAH SCHWARTZ HAS ONE of the largest

gardens in Rockland. Regulars to Matterhorn Nursery, where he is the head grower, know to seek him out for what's new and unusual. Counting the large greenhouses at the Pomona garden center and another facility in Elmira, he oversees about 50,000 square feet of indoor growing space.

And, like the old adage about the shoemaker's children having no shoes, you would almost expect that someone who works so hard professionally at growing things would have an asphalt lawn. But his Congers yard proves to be just as lush and interesting as his greenhouses. While some gardeners plant large numbers of the same plant in giant sweeps, Noah tends to plant one of this, one or two of that and maybe three of something else. "I'm a collector," he says, "so my yard is filled with new and interesting plants I want to try."

It's his home laboratory, of sorts: the perfect spot to try new plants from favorite breeders and see how they do in Rockland soil and weather. This style of gardening also works well with the tidy ranch and small suburban plot on which it

Five New Favorites from Noah's Garden

- 1 *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost', an annual spurge that can take full sun or full shade.
- 2 *Begonia boliviensis* 'Bonfire', a tuberous begonia that can take full sun.
- 3 *Musa basjoo*, a hardy Japanese fiber banana tree that will grow 12 feet tall.
- 4 *Ruellia brittoniana* 'Purple Showers', an annual Mexican petunia.
- 5 *Ipomoea batata* 'Chihuahua', a dwarf sweet-potato vine.

sits. Big swaths of color would overwhelm and dwarf the one-story house. Instead, you'll find a single planting of a new Mexican petunia known as 'Purple Showers' with a small grouping of a new tuberous begonia called 'Bonfire.' An eight-foot-tall yellow sunflower stands next to a newish beefsteak tomato known as 'Julia Child.' An exotic chocolate cosmos (it really smells like chocolate!) holds court with three coleuses from the new 'Kong' series. Hmm... dare we think this is a preview of what will be on nursery shelves next spring?

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