

PERSONAL TECH

A Garden of Delights, Mapped Out in Your Hand

App Smart

By KIT EATON MARCH 27, 2013

The sun and the earth have revolved to the relevant positions in space and spring, ladies and gentlemen, has definitely sprung. While I have the opposite of green thumbs, I now have a handy arsenal of gardening apps to help me in my springtime garden.

Garden Pro, a \$4 iOS app, is a reference app that can help you plan and manage your garden. Its main interface is an exhaustive list of flowers, herbs and vegetables, giving for each the common name, the botanical name and icons that indicate when the plant blooms and what type of water and light conditions it prefers.

Tapping on a plant takes you to a page with more information, including what type of soil it prefers and some basic care instructions. You can add the plant to a list of your preferred plants, which is a separate section of the app. In this section, you can program the app to remind you to do things like water — a reminder will pop up when a particular plant is due for a drink.

A To Do section in the app can log events like fertilizing your garden or buying

compost. A Journal section lets you enter text and photo notes as your garden grows. It's a great app for more experienced gardeners, and even beginners can use it as a learning resource. But some menu designs are confusing, such as having to go to the separate Plants menu to add a new species to your list, instead of being able to do this in the main plant database.

Landscaper's Companion, \$5 iOS and Android app, is slightly more professional in terms of detailed data, and a bit better organized. The plant database is arranged in classes like annuals, grasses, herbs and so on. Each plant's entry includes a short description, typical size, cultivation advice and pictures. But this app is more useful for experienced gardeners, and to add your own data and photos will cost an additional \$7 via an in-app purchase. Its database can also be patchy, so you may not find the exact data you need.

If you're new to gardening and have an Android device, you may like the Beginners Gardening Guide. It's a free text-based app, jammed with useful information and imagery. The app starts with advice about good soil management, then talks about composting. It also offers more detailed information about garden design and on growing vegetable or flower gardens. Its design is basic, and finding data like "plant nutrients" hidden with a lot of other functions under the "more" icon is a little surprising. But it's pleasant to read, and you could consider it a digital reference book.

Garden Tracker, a \$2 iPhone app, will be useful if you already have some idea about what plants you want in your garden. A square grid represents your garden plot. Tapping part of the grid and then selecting a plant from a long scrolling list tells the app what crop or flower you want to plant in that part of your garden. The list has both a description of the plant and a picture.

If you can't find the plant you want, you can add an entry with details like the kind of conditions the plant prefers, and even a photo. When you've built your garden "map," perhaps symbolically representing your own garden, you can tell the app when you have watered, fed or harvested a particular plant.

Gardens are a place where you'll also find bugs. And if you want to know whether a particular insect you've spotted is good or bad for plants, there's the app Bugs In The Garden, \$1 on Android, which has photos of some common insects.

The \$1 iOS and Android app Garden Bugs is similar, with a more comprehensive list of insects and also lists of plant diseases, including advice on treatment.

Quick Call

Reuters has released a free iOS news app that delivers the latest news reports and extras like photos, video and background commentary. It's free on iTunes for iPhones and iPads.

A version of this article appears in print on March 28, 2013, on page B8 of the New York edition with the headline: A Garden of Delights, Mapped Out in Your Hand.