

Garden design software and apps

Story by Shauna Dobbie

If you've been contemplating designing your garden on your computer, here are a few apps to get you started.

Growing Interactive. A number of online design apps come from a company called Growing Interactive. You can sign up for it through GrowVeg (their own entity), Old Farmer's Almanac, Mother Earth News, Sutton Seeds and more. It's the same app wherever you get it, but it is good.

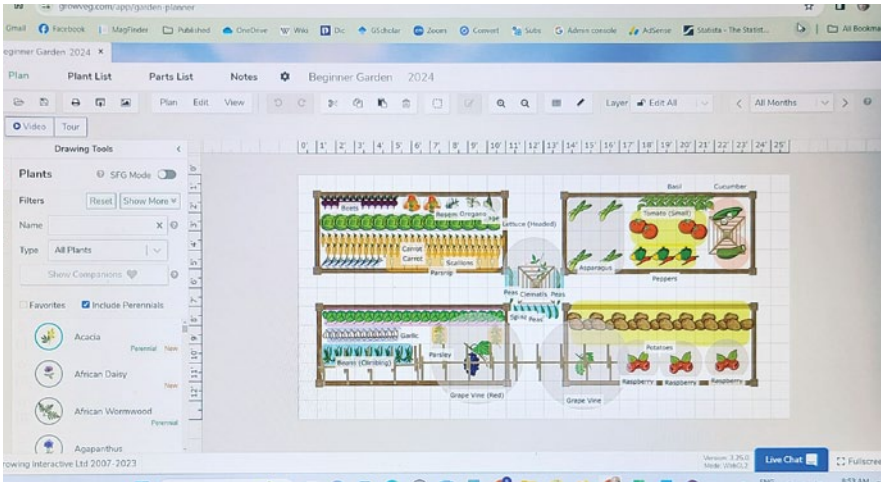
Growing Interactive has drag-and-drop features to make it easy to use without prior experience. There is a learning curve, but most people figure it out pretty quickly. There is a wide range of design elements (plants, structures, paths and so forth) and it is quite versatile for designing various garden styles and layouts.

It also has lists of many, many general plants; for instance, you can drag and drop an allium, and it requires space of 1 foot in every direction. That may be true for some alliums, but not all. You can put the plants closer together than the general recommendation.

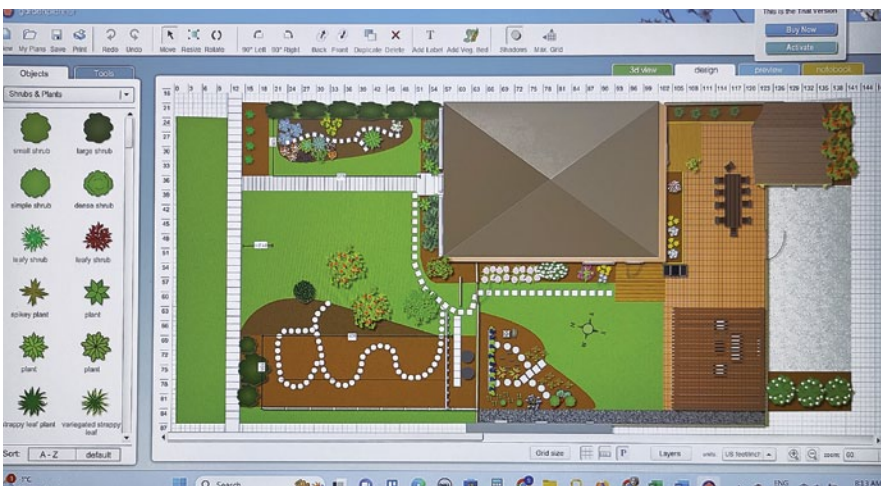
This app also has an online journal where you can keep track of all your thoughts and feelings, by day, and include how much you watered your plants and what you harvested or planted. It gives the weather forecast for your area and there are many articles you can peruse.

Artifact Interactive Garden Planner. Garden Planner is known for its user-friendly interface. It offers a drag-and-drop feature that makes it easy for beginners to design their gardens without prior experience. It has a wide range of design elements, and you can design in 2D then see the garden in 3D.

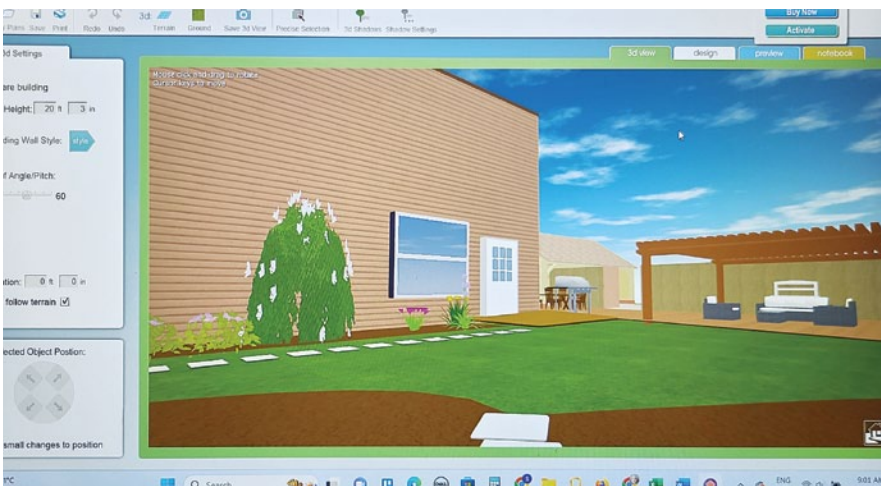
I'll admit, I spent most of a Sunday playing with it. I may be missing something because the 3D doesn't seem to line up with the 2D in a couple of spots. The company says the 3D is in Beta mode, though.



Growing Interactive.



Garden Planner in plan view.



Garden Planner in 3D.

You can build your own structures and plants if what is offered doesn't cover what you're looking for, though I couldn't find many structures in my garden that weren't in the program. Plants, of course, are still difficult; there are many plants, but they are all the general species, though you can change the size of them.

They have special capability to lay out vegetable gardens, particularly square-foot gardens. Neither in building nor in looking at them do they show vegetables above the ground, though. There are little icons of vegetables you can see on the 2D plan, but there is nothing there when you look at 3D.

But I quibble. It's a really good program.

Gardena My Garden. This is a straightforward app that is really for adding watering capabilities. Which makes sense, because Gardena makes tools and watering implements for the garden.

The plants are pretty limited. For flowers they have sunflowers, roses, hydrangeas, lavender, tulips, violets, ferns, reeds and bamboo. For vegetables, they have strawberries, raspberries, currants, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, potatoes and cauliflower. But you can do the layout of your garden... mostly. And you can put in it everything to do with watering systems.

Also, it's free.

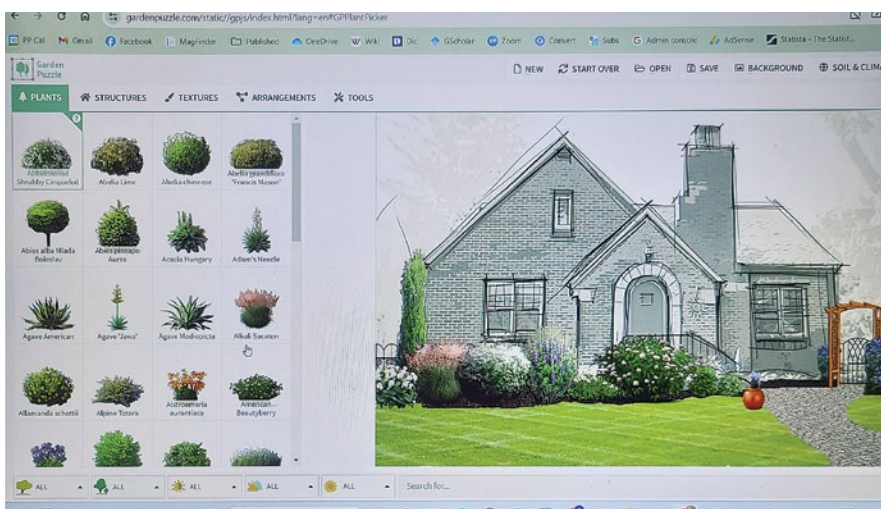
Smart Gardener. If you're an ornamental gardener, skip this one. Smart Gardener is fairly straightforward, focusing more on personalized vegetable garden management. You give it information before you start: your location, garden size, family size, and plants you wish to grow.

With your info input, you choose vegetables to grow. There are various cultivars of plants listed. For instance, there are 34 carrots, 41 types of garlic and 136 varieties of tomatoes. There is information about each variety, the type found in a good seed catalogue. The seeds for these plants are all available at four different American seed sellers.

You then plot these onto a grid you make for your yard. The program tells you what to do – when



My Garden app.



Garden Puzzle.

to start different seeds, whether to start them indoors or in the garden, when to transplant. You can journal your trials and tribulations and add photos.

This tool is more focused on personalized vegetable garden plans and less on the overall aesthetic design. It's great for planning and tracking the progress of your garden.

Garden Puzzle. I think this is the new iteration of Better Homes and Gardens Plan-a-Garden app. Now you have to pay for it.

It is straightforward. You take a picture of your house and garden and upload it. Ensure the picture includes everything you are designing and take it dead-on, if you can. Then you add plants and gazebos and walks to the picture as you see them, not in plan (from above) view. It's kind of fun, but not very

precise. There are some ready-made plant groupings you can add, I'm pretty sure from Better Homes and Gardens.

iScape. This app makes everybody's Top 10 List and I'm not sure why. The free version is only available on your smartphone. (They promised the new version could be used on a laptop but I'm not sure how to get it there.) Like Garden Puzzle, it works in 3D mode; you cannot design in 2D or plan mode.

They have a good selection of plants... presumably. I wasn't able to get into an updated version of the app. You can add a plant by taking a picture of it, which is neat.

In the full version of the app, for US \$30 per month, you can design in actual 3D, using your camera on your yard. I'm not too clear on how this works, but the video tutorial looks cool. 🌱