



### Mandala Sculptures for the Garden

Submitted by Faye Mahaffey  
OSUE Brown County Master Gardener Volunteer

My friends joke about all the magazines that find their way to our home. I subscribe to several...ok...more than several...and my husband loves his magazines too! The cold weather has me sitting in my chair more and looking at old magazines and pulling interesting articles and photographs. The past few days found me leafing through some old Organic Gardening magazines.

Have you ever heard of the term “Mandala”? I was quickly drawn to this article by the beautiful photographs of Mandala sculptures. The author, Heather Rodale, shared that for her, gardening had always been meditative. Absorbed in activity, she would lose track of time. When she planted her flower garden, it was if she was an artist painting with flowers.

Life took a turn for her after she was diagnosed with cancer. She had heard that mandala making was meditative, as it could turn stressful thoughts into calming ones. Now, when she is not in her garden, she finds peace and inspiration planning and making Mandala sculptures from found objects.

Mandala means “circle” in Sanskrit. Mandala forms are characterized by a circular shape, a symmetrical design, and a visible center. Rodale shares that many cultures have versions of mandalas: Native American medicine wheels, cathedral rose windows, and Buddhist sand paintings are just three. Some were part of rituals to promote health or to remove negative energies or events.

If you look up the term Garden Mandala you will actually find information on circular or keyhole gardens. To refine your research you might try Garden Mandala Sculptures.

Rodale explains that in Mandala making, the meditative process comes from consciously focusing on the task, selecting the colors or materials, and arranging them in an orderly and pleasing fashion. When we are calm, we notice things we otherwise might not. The mandala’s value comes from the pleasure of its creation, not the end result.

To make a mandala sculpture, gather objects such as stones, shells, pinecones, beach glass; anything that captures your imagination. On a flat surface, begin in the middle, arranging pieces to form the center. Sometimes Roach measures for symmetry, but more often she just goes with the flow. Continue building outward with items of different sizes and shapes. Create mandalas along themes, such as nuts or stones, or combine different materials in the same mandala.

“Nature is the ultimate mandala maker,” states Roach. Once you start looking, it doesn’t take long to notice the patterns in natural things such as: Flowers, such as passionflower, sunflower, daisy, rose, chrysanthemum; Spider webs; Bird nests; Dandelions in all stages from bud to seeds; or the underside of a mushroom.

Some of you may laugh at my version of a garden mandala sculpture, but all the pieces were easy to find in the barn. I just have to make sure that I didn’t “borrow” anything important!

Warren County OSUE hosts the “Southwestern Ohio Beekeepers School” each year and limits the number of attendees to 350. This year’s school will be held March 28, 2015, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Past programs have filled in less than two weeks! If you are interested, registration material will be available on Thursday, January 15 at <http://warren.osu.edu> (513-695-1311). This is one of the largest and longest running beekeeping schools in the nation. This program is designed to be educational for anyone interested in honeybees, with programs for the beginning and experienced bee keeper.

The cold weather has me daydreaming about digging in the dirt – how about you?

