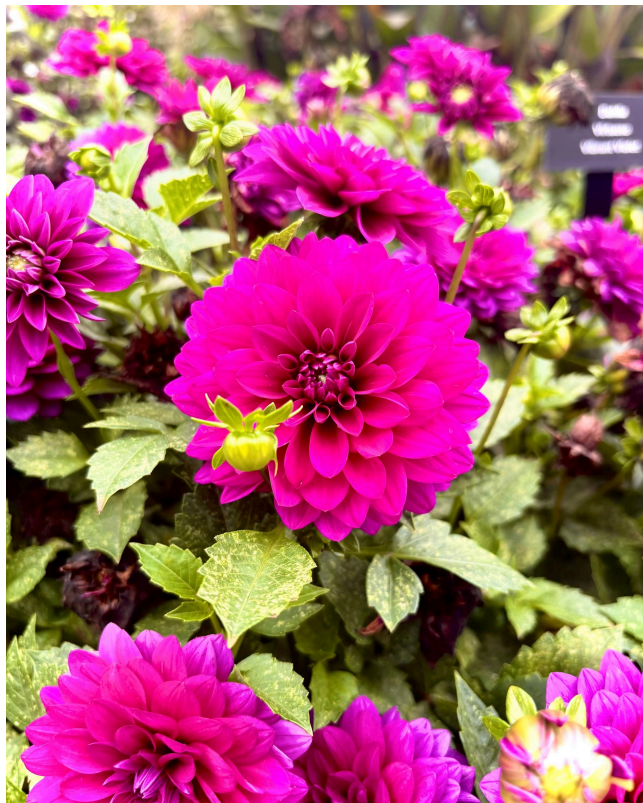




(Image 2)

Why make a memorial garden?-

Having a dedicated location for expressing grief provides an important outlet for grief rather than letting it build up and come out uncontrolled. The need for these locations is part of why we have cemeteries and grave sites. But what does a memorial garden do that a grave stone doesn't? The garden grows and changes while the stone remains static. The garden is alive, demonstrates the cycles of life and death, and can inspire hope. And, if nothing else, the garden is beautiful.

Important note-

This is not intended to tell someone step by step how to build a memorial garden, nor is it intended to tell someone how to grieve. It is instead intended to be a helping hand in finding what works for them when designing a memorial garden. Elements of the garden will change or evolve depending on the needs of the bereaved and the passage of time.

Supplemental reading for plant selection and garden design-

Branhagen, A. (2020). *The Midwest Native plant primer: 225 Plants for an Earth-Friendly Garden*. Timber Press.

Diblik, R. (2014). *The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden*. Timber Press.

Oudolf, P., & Kingsbury, N. (2021). *Hummelo: A Journey Through a Plantsman's Life*. The Monacelli Press, LLC.

Weaner, L., & Christopher, T. (2016a). *Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change*. Hachette UK.

Image citations-

Image 1- (Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "A light in the forest." September 26, 2024)

Image 2- (Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Dahlias in Bloom" September 26, 2024.)

Image 3- (Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Sunrise at the farm." October 8th, 2024)

Image 4- (Gardens Illustrated. [Garden in winter] n.d. Retrieved on February 26th 2025 from <https://www.gardensillustrated.com/garden-equipment/tools/winter-protection-garden-mat-cover>)

Image 5- (Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Crocus" March 13th, 2025)



(Image 1).

Designing an Effective Memorial Garden or Greenspace



<https://doi.org/10.7945/j1v9-br30>
QR Code/Link to Full Project

Author Ethan Rettig

Start by asking questions-

Who is the garden for?- And how many people is it for?

Who will manage it?

What is the goal of the garden?

What is the budget?

How will plant death be handled?- Will dead plants be removed or left? Can the bereaved handle seeing a plant die?

Should any personalization be added?- A flower the same color as their eyes, an oak for their strength. Personal touches make the memorial feel more personal.

Did the deceased have any favorite plants?

Environmental questions- Sun, climate, soil, etc. will determine plant choice

Will this be a space for privacy or community?



(Image 3)

Beneficial elements-

Dappled shade

Seating

Water features- Moving water through bubblers and creeks, or still water through reflection pools

Year round flowers

Private spaces

Woody plants, evergreens and grasses-

Important for winter structure

Diversity of plants- Creates a resilient and visually interesting space.

Fragrant plants- Smell is closely tied to memory

Mixed temporal permanence- Ephemeral flowers that last a moment combined with old trees or stone monuments. Represents the temporary life of the deceased but the permanent impact their life had.



(Image 4)

Plant list- Specific to the midwest, author's favorites.

Oak (*Quercus*)

Hickory (*Carya*)

Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*)

Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*)

Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Viburnums (*Viburnum*)

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

Roses (*Rosa*)

Hydrangea (*Hydrangea*)

Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis*)

Aster (*Symphyotrichum*)

Iris (*Iris*)

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Black eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)

Blazing Star (*Liatris*)

Sunflower (*Helianthus*)

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Purple love grass

(*Eragrostis pectinacea*)

Phlox (*Phlox*)

Bluebells (*Mertensia virginiana*)

Crocus (*Crocus*)

Tulips (*Tulipa*)

Snowdrops

(*Galanthus*)

Daffodils (*Narcissus*)

(Image 5)



