



Website gives guidance to grow gardening skills

When I think of a garden, I think of a calm place suited for quiet reflection. So I'm not sure why the site I'm reviewing this week is named **gardenbeast.com**. A beast implies power and ferocity. A garden suggests flowers and butterflies. Garden Beast would be a good name for a power earth tiller, but it seems a little aggressive for a gardening website name.

Despite the unusual name choice, this is a good site for anyone interested in starting a garden or improving an existing one. It has many how-to articles on a wide variety of gardening topics, as well as reviews on lots of gardening tools and accessories. The site discloses that it has affiliations with some of the products it reviews, so the objectivity of those reviews is questionable.

The home page features a collection of featured articles. The articles cover care for specific



type of plants, different types of gardens, dealing with garden pests and other issues. Each article is presented with a beautiful color photo, a headline and a brief summary that links you to the full article. The articles are well written with lots of good information and illustrated with more stunning photographs. Many articles have links to related articles. Ads are interspersed throughout the articles, as well as alongside them. The ads are a little distracting, but I don't begrudge the site for making money.

More content is accessible from the navigation links at the top of the page. The bulk of it is under the Sections drop-down menu.

The sections include many different types of plants, such as food, flowers, shrubs and trees. There's also sections called Features, Backyard, Reviews, Entertainment and Questions. Each section has multiple pages of articles set up in the same way as the photo/headline links on the home page. Once you're in a section you are looking at a random collection of articles you can browse through. To find information on a specific plant you can use the search function at the top of the site.

Next to the Sections link at the top of the page is a Free eBooks link. The site has a collection of eBooks you can download for free. You have to enter your email to download the books. The site doesn't mention it until after you give your email, but that also signs you up for an electronic newsletter. The eBooks come as PDFs. The books are text heavy and not designed very well, other than having attractive covers.

The other top of the page links are an About section and a Contact section. The About section states the site's goals and features little profiles of the people who run the site. There also is information on the editorial and advertising policies. The Contact section gives the mailing address, social media links and a contact form you can fill out online with any questions you may have.

Garden Beast is a cleanly designed site with lots of really nice photographs. The typography is unified, easy to read and has a clear hierarchy. The navigation is logical and intuitive. There is plenty of content and it's easy to spend time getting lost as you browse through the numerous articles on all aspects of gardening.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.