

Photo by Kris Kann

Highlights:

- Battling Invasive Plant Species
- Tips for working with a design team
- Heavenly Spinach Salad *from Lindsay's Kitchen*

Containing Invasive Plant Species— Let the Battle Begin!



Identifying features of young ivy plants: tri-lobed leaves and small aerial roots on stem

In this region, there are five weeds one needs to be particularly wary of. These are the most pervasive and persistent enemies to healthy growth for your beloved flowers and veggies. They will not go down without a fight, but—armed with knowledge—you *can* defeat them. The first step is, of course: know your enemy.

- Scottish broom
- Ivy
- Blackberry vines
- Horsetail
- Bindweed (also known, far too innocently, as Morning Glory)



The presence of any of these beasts usually indicates a soil problem, such as acidity, poor drainage, or lack of fertility (nutrient-poor). Amending the soil, to discourage weed growth, should be part of your ongoing plan. But you can also combat these foes with the following techniques:

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Efficiency Fix—Get with the program!

Consider a programmable thermostat for your home. Pre-programmed settings are handy if you are away for set hours during the week or if you have times of day that you can be comfortable with a cooler atmosphere. Many people find that they sleep better with the heat turned low, and you can pre-set your system to warm back up again in the early morning—just in time for that alarm!

The Aube/Honeywell thermostat (model TH106 or TH115) is a good example, because it can take several settings per day, but choices are expanding as consumers demand more energy efficient options. This is one of many options, and you should always research and choose the product that is best suited to your personal use and budget.

“Invasive species’ continued ...

Broom: Pull it out by the root. The whole root—no cheating! If the work becomes too heavy, consider a *Puller Bear* (locally made and great for giving your back a well-deserved break). You should be able to find one at your local garden shop.

Ivy and Blackberry: Get a pair of good, thick rose gloves and cut these vines back as close to the root as you can—just keep cutting and cutting until the plant cannot support new growth. Be prepared to continue this cutting campaign for several years—twice a year—if the infestation is bad.

**you do not want ivy to set seeds and become airborne, so get it under control before it blooms!

Horsetail: These spikey devils will punch right through commercial-grade landscape fabric, so if you want to reclaim a badly-infested area, use a natural-fibre (wood, sisal) jute-backed carpet. Lay it right down, overlapping at edges, and leave in place for about two years. After that time, it can be peeled away and discarded, along with the dead horsetail roots below.

*tip: add a foot of compost or topsoil over this carpet barrier and plant shallow-rooted crops or flowers so that you can enjoy your space in the meantime.

Bindweed: Cardboard sheet mulching is the way to go with this bad guy. You **MUST** have a 50 per cent overlap of totally flattened cardboard for this to work (try your local recycling plant, grocery or liquor store for spare boxes) and ensure that you cover the whole area—right up to the grass line or fence. After the cardboard is well laid, you have two options.

1. top with one foot of leaves or manure (*if not needed as a planting area immediately)
2. top with one foot of compost or topsoil and plant with shallow-rooted seasonal crops, such as lettuces.

After one growing season, peel it all back, clean out the dead roots and start fresh. Any of these weeds can be composted **AFTER** they have been “cooked” (tied in black garbage bags, with a little water, and left in the sun for 2-3 weeks) using a **hot composting** method. The following website is a great reference: www.invasiveplantcouncilbc.ca



Pictured from top to bottom: broom, blackberry, horsetail and purple bindweed

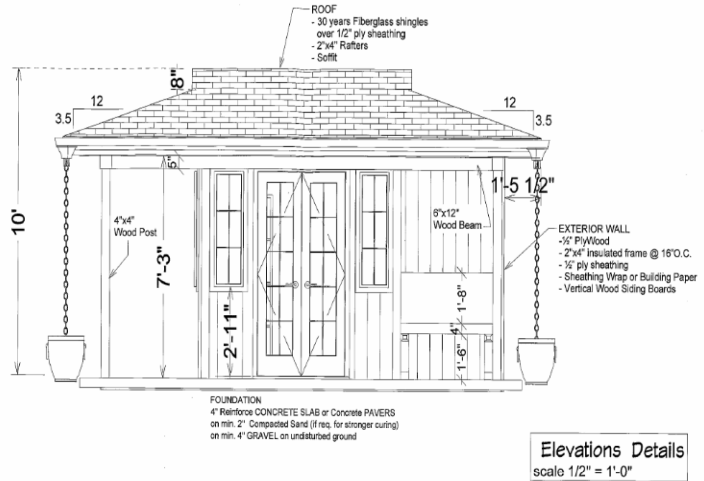
Designer Q. & A. with David Coulson Tips for Working with a Design Team

What is a top priority for homeowners looking to renovate or rebuild?

Finding a designer and contractor that they trust and can work with. Then developing a budget that is reasonable.

How can homeowners best prepare for a) consultation with a design team, and b) phase 1 of construction?

Consultation is most productive when the client has determined what they really need and want from their living space, and, ideally, couples have also worked out any differences they have between them, regarding that vision. Bring magazine clippings and other concrete visual references to define your style, like fabric samples (upholstery) and favourite materials.



Custom designed garden house in Cobble Hill

It's a good idea to list “must have” and “wish list”

features separately, so adjustments can be made to accommodate budget and timelines requested. Always be candid about expectations regarding budget and timing—these critical details must be crystal clear, so that communication starts off on a good foot.

If you are doing a whole house renovation, make arrangements for alternate accommodation when construction begins. It's well-worth it, financially and otherwise. Work proceeds faster, labour costs stay down, and there are no air quality concerns for you and your family.

Are there many misconceptions about the design build process?

Yes. Some homeowners perceive designers as an unnecessary cost; however, they are better characterized as an investment. An experienced designer will bring a lot to the table—including the ability to integrate lifestyle preferences, future use, and budget fine points into the building design. Another benefit is the flexibility of the designer, to adapt your plans to unforeseen changes in construction, especially during renovation.



How can a homeowner ultimately protect themselves and feel confident in the design builder or contractor they've chosen to work with?

Get a detailed contract—with the scope of work clearly laid out. This should include terms, conditions, and a plan for arbitration. Take the time to call provided references and to check that the company's insurance is up to date.

from Lindsay's Kitchen: Heavenly Spinach Salad

I have converted so many salad sceptics with this recipe—it would be a shame not to share it. Feel free to experiment—use local cheeses and choose a nice tart apple to suit your taste.

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TO HAVE:

- 1-2 bunches of spinach, rinsed
- 3-4 strips bacon or pancetta
- 1 apple, diced
- 1/2 cup cheese, cubed

Dressing:

- 1/2 cup mayo
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp wine vinegar
- 3-4 tbsp sugar
- 3 tbsp pure maple syrup

TO DO:

1. Cook bacon until crispy, crumble
2. Blend all dressing ingredients, adjust as necessary
3. Just before serving, pour desired amount of dressing over spinach and toss
4. Add bacon, apple and cheese and toss lightly

Options: Add 1 tsp chopped fresh parsley to the dressing

Add toasted nuts for extra crunch and make sure you make lots—you'll need it!

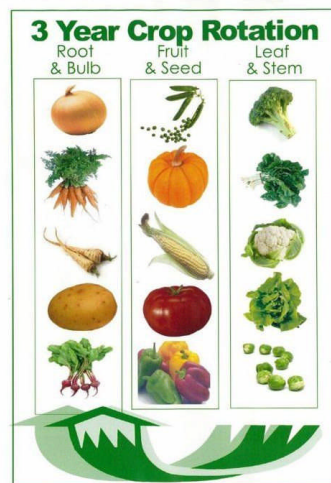
Seed of Truth: Crop Rotation, Naturally

The main reasons for rotating crops are to allow a variety of nutrients to rebuild within the soil, and to break up the disease and pest (insect) cycle. The basic principle is:

Do not grow plants from the same family in the same place more often than once every 3-4 years.

The most straightforward method for crop rotation is pictured and described below. First, make a list of all the veggies you want to grow, divided into three groups—determined by which part of the plant is *eaten*:

- root & bulb (carrot, parsnip, potato, leek, radish)
- fruit & seed (pea, bean, tomato, capsicum)
- leaf & stem (cabbage, celery, lettuce, chard)



This method is designed for a medium sized garden (three or more vegetable beds) or farm, but the principles can be applied to almost any area where vegetables are planted repeatedly

Second, plant one family in each bed and rotate annually.

In a smaller garden, modern organic fertilizers *can* keep your soil fertile and usable without crop rotation, but why pay more for soil-boosters if you can let Mother Nature top you up?