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Tend to your loved ones' memories with a garden

Jeanine Matlow



A special plaque can mark a memory garden for your family. (Big Hug)

It's time to revisit our outdoor spaces. Katie Kiyo, owner of Big Hug, an online remembrance gift company based in Bloomfield Hills, recommends a memorial garden or "memory garden" as a meaningful and enduring tribute to a special person or beloved pet.

This type of dedication could coincide with a holiday such as Earth Day, Arbor Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day or Memorial Day, says Kiyo, whose company offers unique and personalized gifts to honor or remember loved ones or celebrate special events.

"It can be as small as a single tree or special plant, or a large flowerbed with meandering paths and lots of different kinds of flowers, trees, shrubs, grasses, statuary and other garden accents," she says.

To make a memory garden meaningful, consider the favorite flowers, colors, or fragrances of the person you are honoring, adds Kiyo.

Or, you might select plants and flowers that have special meanings, like forget-me-nots, rosemary (remembrance and friendship), lily of the valley (aka Ladder to Heaven), tulips (friendship), or pink carnations (I'll never forget you).

An oak tree can be a symbol of strength. A sun catcher in the shape of a dragonfly (often associated with the spiritual afterlife) is another option.

"Add a plaque or a sign, like one that says "Mom's Garden" or a welcome plaque or marker that includes a name or a meaningful quote," Kiyoo suggests.

Benches and tree stumps provide seating for your outdoor space. Embellish the area with garden stones, markers or personalized wind chimes.

Bird feeders and bird baths add a lovely touch, as does a sundial that symbolizes eternity. Even a garden relic can be a focal point, such as a rusty anchor that honors a fisherman in the family.

Water features help to create a sanctuary for quiet reflection, Kiyoo says.

You might also opt to incorporate keepsakes, such as found objects from the seashore or stones from your travels.

"Add to the garden on important anniversary dates," Kiyoo says. "Make it a family project."

Your outdoor vignettes could commemorate happy occasions and milestones, such as birthdays, weddings and graduations. Tree Huggers Tree Plaques are ideal for this purpose. The custom-engraved stainless steel plaques are mounted to a tree with a tension spring that expands as the tree grows.

The plaques can fit up to four lines of text and an icon.

Lastly, Kiyoo mentions Create Your Own Garden Stone Kits that allow you to personalize your outdoor setting. She has a friend who casts her grandchildren's handprints into the stones, marks them with the year and places them throughout the garden.

"This is a creative alternative to the 'growth yardstick' that we all remember as kids," says Kiyoo.

For information, contact Katie Kiyoo at (248) 594-1560 or go to bighugllc.com.

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