Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 4
Opening the Setting or Preferences Screen ..................................................................................... 2
  Your time zone ................................................................................................................................ 3
  How times and dates are shown ....................................................................................................... 5
  Private message e-mail notification ............................................................................................... 6
  Ask a Question e-mail notification ................................................................................................. 6
  Receive weekly newsletter .............................................................................................................. 6
  Automatically "Watch" threads that you start ................................................................................... 6
  Automatically "Watch" threads that you reply to ............................................................................. 6
  Automatically jump to the first unread post in threads ................................................................. 6
  Open external links in a new window ............................................................................................. 6
  Show signatures in forum posts ...................................................................................................... 7
  Show member avatars ..................................................................................................................... 7
  Show forum smilies and emoticons ................................................................................................. 8
  Show facebook and other social media widgets .......................................................................... 8
  Show community-submitted photo banners sitewide ................................................................. 9
  Add a watermark to uploaded photos ........................................................................................... 9
  Allow your forum photos to be associated with plants in the database ...................................... 11
  Show how many items per page .................................................................................................... 11
  Ignore List ....................................................................................................................................... 12
  Custom menubar .......................................................................................................................... 13
  Custom Homepage ....................................................................................................................... 13
  Error! Bookmark not defined. ....................................................................................................... 13
  E-Mail and Password ..................................................................................................................... 21

7
Introduction

The National Gardening Association web site, located at http://Garden.org, allows each member to set their personal preferences. Currently, the member can set the following items:

- Your time zone
- How times and dates are shown
- Private message e-mail notification
- Ask a Question e-mail notification
- Receive weekly newsletter
- Automatically "Watch" threads that you start
- Automatically "Watch" threads that you reply to
- Automatically jump to the first unread post in threads
- Open external links in a new window
- Show signatures in forum posts
- Show member avatars
- Show forum smilies and emoticons
- Show facebook and other social media widgets
- Show community-submitted photo banners sitewide
- Add a watermark to uploaded photos
- Allow your forum photos to be associated with plants in the database
- Show how many items per page
- Ignore list
• Custom menu bar
• E-Mail and Password

**Opening the Setting or Preferences Screen**

Before you can edit your preferences, you need to open the ‘Settings’ page. To do this, find the small, blue person icon in the upper right corner of the browser window. When you click on it, a menu will drop down. Click on the ‘Settings’ option, which is currently the last option on the menu. The location is illustrated in figure 1 below.

![Figure 1 - Opening the Settings Page](image)
As of October 10, 2016, the ‘Preferences’ page looks like figure 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>preferences</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your time zone</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>US Eastern Daylight Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How times and dates are shown?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Show actual times and dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private message e-mail notification?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, email me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a Question e-mail notification?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, email me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive the weekly newsletter?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, email me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatically &quot;Watch&quot; threads that you start?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatically &quot;Watch&quot; threads that you reply to?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatically jump to the first unread post in threads?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open external links in a new window?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show signatures in forum posts?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, I want to see the signatures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show member avatars?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, I want to see the avatars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show forum smilies and emoticons?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, I want to see the graphical faces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show facebook and other social media widgets?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>No, don’t show them to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show community-submitted photo barners sitewide?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes, please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add a watermark to uploaded photos?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>No, don’t add a watermark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow your forum photos to be associated with plants in the database?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show how many items per page?</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore List</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Add or remove members to your ignore list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom Menubar</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Manage your custom menubar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom Homepage</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Customize your Garden.org homepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mail and Password</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Change your E-Mail or password</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2 - Preferences Screen**

When the Preferences screen opens, you will notice that each option has either a drop-down box across from it, or a link. Each setting will be address below. Please refer to Figure 2 for their location on the Preferences screen. **IMPORTANT:** You must click on the SAVE button at the bottom of the screen when you have finished making your changes. If you don’t click the Save button, everything that you have changed will be lost and you will have to set them again.

**Your time zone**
When you click on the time zone drop-down, you will see a list of all of the time zones around the world, as in the Figure 3 below. Find your time zone and click it. The drop-down will close, and your selected
A note about how times and dates work on the site. While you get to specify your time zone, please be aware that while posts all show the correct time, system events such as seed swap start and end times are based on the system time, which may or may not be the same as your local time.

Figure 3 - Select your time zone
How times and dates are shown
The time and date display has two options as shown in Figure 4.

The default setting for how times and dates appear is the "x minutes ago" format. Rather than show when the post was made, the system will display it as "5 minutes ago", "2 hours ago", ' yesterday', etc. as appropriate.' Note that setting does not affect all time and date displays. Posts will still show the actual time and date of the post.

An example of the "x minutes ago" is shown below in Figure 3.

When set to 'Show actual times and dates', the actual time and date of the post will appear, adjusted for your time zone. For example, Oct 1, 2016 9:18 PM EDT
**Private message e-mail notification**

Private messages are known by the nick name of ‘Tree Mail’. When someone sends you a tree mail, you have the option of being notified in your regular E-Mail that a new tree mail has arrived. The default setting is "No, don’t email", meaning that you won’t receive any notification in your regular E-Mail about new tree mails that you get. By changing this setting to "Yes, email me", you will be sent a notification E-Mail anytime you receive a new tree mail. Note that your regular E-Mail is the address that you specified when you registered on this site. (You can change your E-Mail address at anytime using an option further down on the Preferences page.)

**Ask a Question e-mail notification**

Much like the private message notification above, you can choose if you want to be notified when someone answers your submission through the ‘Ask a Question’ feature under the 'Community' tab. This option works in the same manner as the private message notification above.

**Receive weekly newsletter**

Each week, the National Garden Association sends out an E-Mail newsletter on Saturdays. When you initially registered and joined the National Garden Association, you were given the option to receive the newsletter or not. This is where you can change your mind.

Much like the private message notification above, you can choose if you want to be notified when someone answers your submission through the ‘Ask a Question’ feature under the 'Community' tab. This option works in the same manner as the private message notification above.

**Automatically "Watch" threads that you start**

When you start a new discussion thread, it would be helpful to know when someone posts a reply. To do this, change the setting from 'No' to 'Yes'. When set to 'Yes', the thread will automatically appear in the thread watcher section on your home page.

**Automatically "Watch" threads that you reply to**

If you reply to a thread, and you will, changing the setting from 'No' to 'Yes'cause the name of the thread to automatically appear in the thread watcher section on your home page when ever someone posts a comment.

**Automatically jump to the first unread post in threads**

Depending on the topic, a thread can become very long in a very short time, having thousands of posts. Posts/replies/comments in a thread ware listed oldest to newest. To make it easier to get to the end of the thread, change this option from 'No' to 'Yes'. The next time you open the thread, the system will automatically position you at the last post that you read. This can saves a lot of time on long threads.

**Open external links in a new window**

When someone posts a comment in a thread, they have the ability to include links to other web pages. Changing this option from 'No' to 'Yes' forces your browser to open those links in a new browser window or tab, leaving your NGA page untouched.
**Show signatures in forum posts**
As part of their profile settings, members can include a 'signature'. The signature can contain just about anything the member wants you to know. This can be their favorite quote, a note about their avatar, etc.

To view

![Signature Example](image1)

*Figure 7 - Where the signature appears in a post.*

**Show member avatars**

*What's an avatar?* The avatar is the small picture that appears in the upper left corner of a forum post. Some members use their actual picture for their avatar. Others use a picture of something they've grown, their gardens, pets, children, etc. If you don't care to see the avatars, set this option to 'No'. In the example shown in Figure 7 below, the member is using a photo of a hosta bloom as their avatar.

![Avatar Example](image2)

*Figure 8 - Member Avatar*
**Show forum smilies and emoticons**

Smilies and emoticons... you either think they're the greatest thing since sliced bread, or you can't stand them. If you fall into the "can't stand them" group, set this option to 'No, don't show them to me.' and the system won't display them in posts. A word of caution however, some posts may contain nothing but emoticons. If you turn off their display, you may see blank posts.

![Figure 9 - Show or hide Smilies](image)

Emoticons aren't new. Their history can be traced back to the 19th century. As technology as changed, so have emoticons. Nowadays, people are more familiar with the term *emoji* than they are with emoticon. They are heavily used in text messaging, along with texting shorthand that take some getting used to.

**Show facebook and other social media widgets**

Yep, The National Garden Association is also on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/Garden.Org/](https://www.facebook.com/Garden.Org/). If you turn this option on, a 'widget' will appear on the right side of the screen on the forum pages, under the "Watch" box. Clicking on the widget will take you to the appropriate social media site. To make it easy to hide the widgets, a *<Remove this?>* link will appear under the widget.

![Figure 10 - Social Media Widget(s)](image)
**Show community-submitted photo banners sitewide**

A number of members create and contribute artwork to the site to be used as the banners at the top of site pages. When set to "No, only in the forums", these banners will only appear on the forum pages. The top of non-forum pages will look similar to Figure 11.

![Figure 11 - Banners Turned Off](image)

If the option is set to "Yes, please!", the top of all pages will look similar to Figure 12.

![Figure 12 - Banners Turned On](image)

If you would like to create and submit a banner, a tutorial is provided on the site at

http://garden.org/thread/view/10886/Making-a-Banner-Tutorial/

**Add a watermark to uploaded photos**

A watermark is an image or text that is placed on top of another image to indicate ownership, copyright, etc. If you sell your photographs, you most likely have a watermark on all of the images in your 'catalog' to prevent someone from copying your work and claiming credit and future profit. Here on the NGA site, a watermark can be used by other members to see who took that fantastic photo of a hummingbird dining at a campsis radicans bloom.

When you upload pictures to the site, you have the capability of having the system add a 'watermark' to your submissions. Available options are shown below in Figure 13.

![Figure 13 - Add Water Mark Options](image)

A plain black image has been uploaded using each setting to illustrate the resulting change to your picture. The black image was selected so that you may see exactly what the system adds. Note that depending on the actual composition of your picture, the watermark may be highly visible or look like random 'noise' that blends into your picture.
The default watermark setting is "No, don't add a watermark". Your picture will be uploaded to the system with no additional information added. It will appear just as it does on your computer and/or mobile device as shown in Figure 14.

If you select "Yes, a small text watermark with my name.", the system will add text similar to the following at the bottom of your picture. Note that each line in the text is roughly 20 pixels tall. If you are uploading a small image, the copyright text may hide most of your image.

If you would prefer an image watermark, select the "Yes, a large graphical watermark." option. The system will add the National Garden Association logo at the bottom of your picture. The size of the NGA logo image is approximately 120 x 120 pixels. As with a text watermark, a small image may be obscured by the watermark.
The final watermark option is "Let me specify some custom text for a watermark.". If you select this option, a box will open allowing you to enter your custom text. Note that only the first 3 lines of your custom text will be used.

![Watermark Option: Let me specify some custom text for a watermark.](image)

Your text will be added to the bottom of the image. As with the other watermark options, if your picture is small, it may be obscured by your custom text.

Allow your forum photos to be associated with plants in the database

![Figure 18 - Associate photo with plants in the Plant Database](image)

Show how many items per page

Whether it be forum discussions, plant lists or swaps, You have the ability to specify how many items appear on a display page. The system default is 20 items to a page. While this may be ok for short discussions or your initial plant list, an active discussion can easily end up having hundreds of pages. For example, as of this writing, the discussion thread *September 2016 website redesign is complete!* has 729 posts. Using the system default of 20 items to a page, the discussion is 37 pages long. This can make it rather difficult to track a thought process through the thread. Fortunately, you have the ability to change
this. The “Show how many items per page” option allows you to specify how many items you want per page from the system default of 20 items up to a maximum of 500. When you click on the drop-down, you will see a list of item counts from 20 to 500 in multiples of 20. (20, 40, 60, 80, 100, etc.) You can change this at any time to suit your needs. This is shown below in Figure 19.

![Figure 19 - How many items per page?](image)

**Ignore List**
If, for some reason, you no longer want to interact with a particular member, you have the ability to block a member. When you click on the 'Add or remove members to your ignore list' link, the block form will appear in a new tab or window as shown below in Figure 20.

Any member you have on this list will be ignored. You will not see their posts in the forums. They will **not** be notified. This list is secret; only you can see it.
Custom menubar
As you read through discussion threads, you may see references to the custom menu bar and wonder where it is and how does it work. Figure 21 shows the different icons that appear at the top of every page on the NGA site.

The second icon from the right represents a piece of chain, otherwise known as links, and looks like this: 🔄. Clicking on this icon opens your custom menu bar. It is important to note that if you haven't defined any items in your custom menu bar, the links icon will not appear. The "Custom Menubar" option is where you can add or change your custom links.

Your custom menubar can contain links to pages on the NGA site or anywhere else on the Internet that you would like quick access to. Clicking on the "Manage your custom menubar" link will open a form the custom menubar form in a new window or tab.

If you have never set up any items previously, the form will have one blank row, as shown in Figure 22. If you already have a custom menubar, any links that you have set up will appear in the form, as in Figure 23.
Managing your custom menu bar

Here you can add your own custom links to the navigation bar on the site. They will show up in a link dropdown. You can add as many as you can make room for. For each link you want, just click the "Add another link" button at the bottom. When you're done, click on "Save your changes".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enter the link name</th>
<th>Copy and paste the link address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Plant List</td>
<td><a href="http://garden.org/lists/view/RickM/">http://garden.org/lists/view/RickM/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Posts</td>
<td><a href="http://garden.org/apps/stars/user/Rick">http://garden.org/apps/stars/user/Rick</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Buys</td>
<td><a href="http://garden.org/forums/view/forsale/">http://garden.org/forums/view/forsale/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAG Recipe Book</td>
<td><a href="http://garden.org/thread/view/49557/MAG-Recipe-Book/">http://garden.org/thread/view/49557/MAG-Recipe-Book/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage 2017 Spring Swap</td>
<td><a href="http://garden.org/apps/swap/hsst/view/10/">http://garden.org/apps/swap/hsst/view/10/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add another link   - Save your changes

* Return to your public profile

Figure 22 - Blank Custom Menubar Form

Figure 23 - Custom Menubar form with defined links.

To add a new link, click on the "Add another link" button. Once you have set up your links, you must click on the "Save your changes" button to save your custom menu bar.
Customize your Garden.org homepage
One of the best features of the NGA site is the ability to customize the appearance of your home page. The home page is the very first page that you see when you come to the site. You may see members refer to it as the front page.

When you first join the site, your page definition looks like the one shown in Figure 24. The actual appearance is shown in Figures 25, 26 and 27.

As you will see, the actual page content can be quite long. However, by defining your own format, you can shorten it up quite a bit. For example, If you don't need to see the recent photo sections, you don't need to have them on the page. Likewise, if you don't need to see the complete list of 100+ forums, they can also be removed from the page.

Note: While setting up your custom page isn't difficult, it can be time consuming, and frustrating at times, as you play with various layouts.
Drag from here

To the column you want over here

Available for use:
- Fun Random Plant Image
- Fun Landscape Photo
- Fun Random Idea
- Watched Forums
- Recent Database Comments

Add a new row with 1 column

Row 2, Column 1
- Main Article

Row 2, Column 2
- Announcements and News

Row 3, Column 1
- Cool NGA Feature 1

Row 3, Column 2
- Cool NGA Feature 2

Row 3, Column 3
- Cool NGA Feature 3

Row 3, Column 4
- Cool NGA Feature 4

Row 4, Column 1
- Popular Pages

Row 4, Column 2
- Inspirational Stuff

Row 4, Column 3
- Calendar of Events

Row 5, Column 1
- Watcher Notifications
- Moderators Box
- Today's Featured Plants

Row 5, Column 2
- Recent Ideas

Row 6, Column 1
- Recently Popular Photos

Row 7, Column 1
- Recent Database Photos

Row 7, Column 2
- Recent Landscape Photos

Row 8, Column 1
- Plant Performance Reports

Row 8, Column 2
- Plant Log

Row 9, Column 1
- Recent Threats

Row 9, Column 2
- Recent Acorn Tips

+ View your finished dashboard
+ Clear your dashboard and start over
+ Reset your dashboard to the default

Tips: Add as many rows as you like. Each new row will be added at the bottom. If you mess up, just clear your dashboard and start over again. If you have so many rows that you can't see them all at once, zoom your window out a bit until you see them all, then when finished, reset your zoom back to normal. You don't have to save your changes - they are automatically saved.

Avoid using more than 3 columns per row.

Figure 24 – Initial Home Page Layout
Figure 25 - Top area of the initial custom home page
Figure 26 - Middle area of the initial customer home page
Figure 27 - Bottom area of the initial custom home page
Before you start to customize the page layout, you need to decide how you will access the site most of the time. If you primarily use a desktop computer with a large monitor, you have more freedom than if you are using a tablet or cell phone. Cell phones, in particular, can be a challenge as their screens are so small.

When creating your page, you will have the following items to choose from:

- Announcements and News
- Calendar of Events
- Cool NGA Feature 1 (The NGA Garden Calendar)
- Cool NGA Feature 2 (Find Your Hardiness Zone)
- Cool NGA Feature 3 (The Garden Calculator)
- Cool NGA Feature 4 (The NGA Garden Directory)
- Fun Landscape Photo
- Fun Random Idea
- Fun Random Plant Image
- Inspirational Stuff
- Main Article
- Moderator Box*  
- Plant Logs
- Plant Performance Reports
- Popular Pages
- Recent Acorn Tips
- Recent Database Comments
- Recent Database Photos
- Recent Ideas
- Recent Landscape Photos
- Recent Threads
- Recently Popular Photos
- Today's Featured Plants
- Watched Forums
- Watcher Notifications

* The Moderator Box will only display if you are the moderator of a discussion forum.

To begin customizing your home page, click on the "Customize your Garden.org homepage" link. Your screen will change to something similar to what is shown in Figure 24. You will notice that there are two distinct areas on the screen. The left side has a box labeled "Available for use:" that appears under the "Drag from here" graphic. This box contains all of the options listed above.

The remainder of the screen is where you will define your layout. It appears under the "To the column you want over here" graphic. You will also see the 'Add a new row' line, as shown in Figure 28.

The home page is laid out using rows and columns. Think of the page as a new vegetable bed that you are planting and the rows and columns correspond to the different things you're going to plant. Each garden row can have up to four different columns or types of plant. Your plants would be the different items listed above that can appear in your garden. Remember, you don't have to plant everything.

To begin your page, you need to create a new row, just like you're planting your garden. Click on the small dro-down in front of the word "columns" and select 1, 2, 3 or 4. This sets up the number of areas to put your plants in in the row. **If your primary way of accessing the site will be a cell phone, do not use more than 3 columns to minimize display problems.**

Once you decide how many columns you want, click on the "Add it" button. Once a row is added, it
cannot be removed. However, a blank row is ignored by the system, so you can just add a new row with the number of columns that you want.

**E-Mail and Password**
When you click on the 'Change your E-Mail or password' link, a new tab or window similar to the following will open.

Using this screen, you may change your E-Mail address and/or your password.

![Managing your account](image)

*Figure 29 - Updating your password and E-Mail address*

**Conclusion**
We hope that this guide will answer most of your questions on how to customize the National Gardening Association web site to your liking. If at any time you have any questions, please feel free to post them in the Welcome and Help Center forum located at [https://garden.org/forums/view/welcome/](https://garden.org/forums/view/welcome/)*