

Flowering Outdoors

Gardens & Parties

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with Lydia Somerville

Foreword by

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SCHULTZ DISHES ON DINNER PARTIES

- A relaxed, confident, slightly bossy hostess (or host) is key. When you are relaxed, your guests can be, too. Be completely organized and leave little for the last minute. Hire help if you can.
- Arrival is the crucial moment when guests decide, if unconsciously, whether this is going to be fun. Dim the lights and cue the votive candles. Play lively music, but softly enough to talk over. (Turn it off during dinner; life is distracting enough.) Give guests a drink the instant they walk in. Pre-poured glasses of wine prevent a rush at the bar. Offer nonalcoholic options, too. As a (slightly bossy) hostess, make introductions. Scan the group for wayward souls and wing them in.
- Have a seating plan, however small or informal your party. It saves a world of fumbling and possibly hurt feelings. Place cards are fine, but names scribbled on scrap paper will do. Seat kindred spirits together, whether they are live wires or wallflowers. They will be most comfortable and best amused with their own sort.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Schultz is all about high-low, here using melamine plates from Pottery Barn in two patterns, vintage green stemware, heirloom silver goblets, and mercury glass votives. Centerpieces are mostly dahlias and zinnias from the garden, with roses from friends and guests Gracie and Ryan Poulson of Grace Rose Farm in Santa Ynez. Schultz rubber-stamped butterflies on the place cards. ABOVE: One of the few formal elements of the landscape is the grove of olive trees created by Los Angeles-based landscape designer Art Luna. Many decorative fabrics come in fifty-four-inch widths, making them easily adapted as tablecloths for rectangular tables, no sewing required. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A rendering of one of the majestic oaks that dot the property adorns personalized napkins. Watermelon-, peach-, and citrus-inspired cocktails do double duty as decorative elements on the bar. A chilled gazpacho garnished with herbs makes for a refreshing appetizer. A few pieces of inherited Mexican silver, like this commodious bowl, echo the ranch's history as an early Mexican land grant.



ELIAS'S TIPS FOR ENTERTAINING

- Forage your yard for floral materials. Hydrangea blossoms make impactful, long-lasting floral arrangements if you cut the stems under water.
- Always offer a drink first thing. Having a special cocktail premixed kicks the festivities off with flair.
- If weather permits, take indoor chairs outside for extra seating. Bringing something fancy to the outdoors adds a note of nonchalance to the party.
- Layer your table linens and china for a lush, abundant look. Mix china patterns to add contrasting colors. Your tablecloth does not have to cover the entire table. Drape it across the middle of the table for a casual, picnic table effect.
- Do not forget lighting. Wind lots of string lights into trees and shrubbery for a magical vibe after the sun sets.



ABOVE: Elias loves mixing colors and patterns in her table settings. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: In Elias's front yard courtyard, a built-in stucco bench provides seating on one side, with additional chairs pulled up for alfresco meals. The two-sided fireplace opens up the covered space to the outdoors, and a spray of yellow tulips is a colorful exclamation point. On the banquette, a series of pillows in the same fabrics shows off elaborate trim applications. Courtney wanted to include husband Mark in planning the space, so they created a cigar-smoking nook.



BEALL'S FARM TABLE INGREDIENTS

"Whenever we sit in the garden, we want it to be open and inviting," says Beall. Here, she breaks down the ingredients of the floral arrangements and the festive table.

FLOWERS

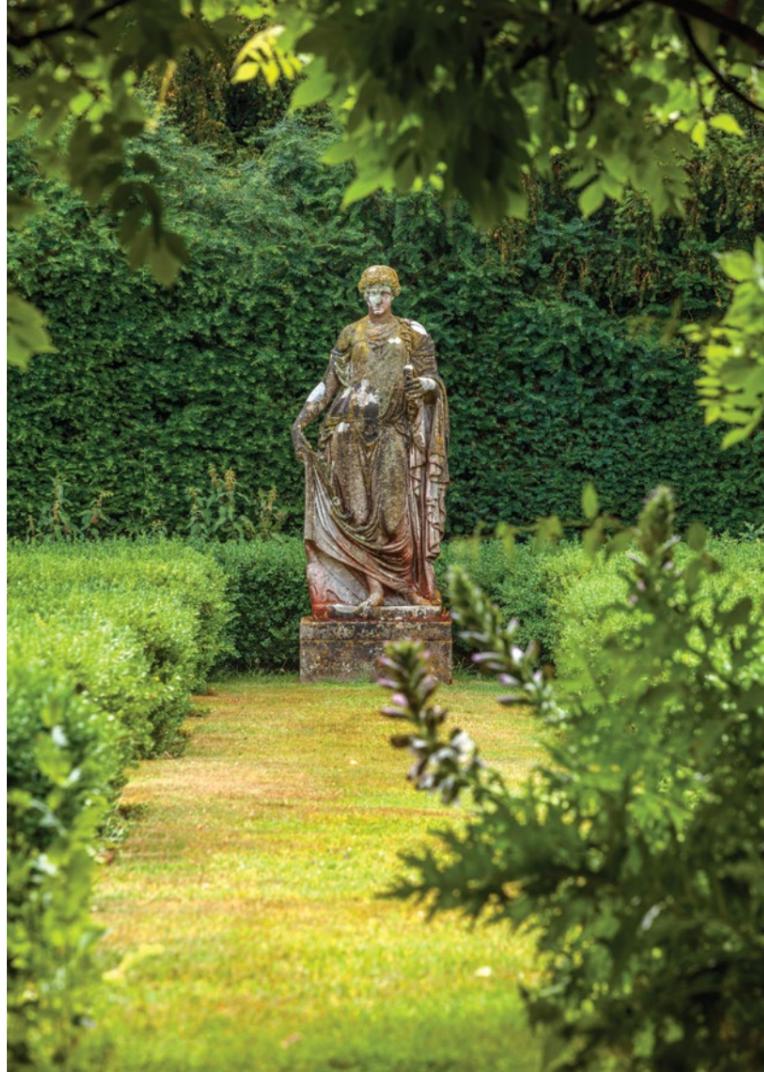
- **Celosia (Cockscomb or Plume Celosia):** The bright orange and red feathery plumes or brainlike textures add height and a unique shape to the bouquet.
- **Cosmos:** Light and airy, these pink and magenta blooms bring a whimsical, wildflower feel.
- **Hydrangeas:** The clusters of greenish blooms provide fullness and contrast against the small, more delicate flowers.
- **Lisianthus:** The soft pink blooms offer a delicate, ruffled texture similar to roses.
- **Veronica (Speedwell):** The tall, slender, purple spikes give elegance and movement.
- **Zinnias:** Growing up, zinnias meant summer. My mom always had them growing in our yard with vases of them all over our house. Bright and bold, these flowers come in shades of orange, pink, and yellow, adding a cheerful, rustic touch.

- **Garden greenery and filler flowers:** Various leafy greens and tiny blossoms provide texture and depth, complementing the larger focal flowers.

COLOR PALETTE AND ELEMENTS

- **Soft blues and whites:** The layered dinnerware features a combination of a large white pottery charger, a blue dinner plate, and a small white plate with delicate hand detailing.
- **Warm wood tones:** The natural wood table provides an organic, rustic contrast to the refined dishware.
- **Plaid textiles:** The light plaid runner and napkin, in soft blues and whites, contribute to a relaxed, garden-inspired charm.
- **Floral accents:** Fresh zinnias, wildflowers, and seasonal blooms in shades of pink, orange, and deep purple are arranged in glass vases of varying heights and colors (amber, pink, and clear glass).
- **Gold and amber hues:** The gold-leaf, patterned tumbler brings warmth and texture to the table as it sits beside the brighter-colored vases, adding a subtle hint that is delicate alongside the classic, simple wineglasses.





HICKS'S TRIED-AND-TRUE ENTERTAINING TIPS

- Rely on your must-haves. Pretty napkins are mine. I do not mind whether it is a good linen napkin or a paper napkin, as long as they are pretty and clean. Set the table. It makes it feel that you have made the effort. I think something in the middle of the table is important.
- Adapt your table seasonally. My entertaining style changes by season. I always want a pretty table. I always love fresh flowers from the garden. I love to use old jam jars on an outdoor table. I do not want it to look pretentious.
- You can be a host anywhere. You do not have to live in the Bahamas. You do not have to have a beautiful garden in England. You can find a courtyard table at a swank resort and transform it by getting a new tablecloth, and by doing a huge arrangement of flowers.
- Cocktail hour is the most important meal of the day. It is the communing over a shared libation. It is the time that we stop, we pause, and we break bread together. We catch up with one another, we look each other in the eye, and we put our screens down.



GROSSMAN'S TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FLOWER GARDEN

- Keep your plant variety selection to a minimum and plant them in large groupings.
- Figure out your color scheme. It will then limit your choices and make things easier to choose because a whole bunch of things are not available.
- Do not bite off more than you can chew. You do not know what the maintenance is going to look like for at least a year.
- I am not a huge fan of a long-term master plan. You might sell your house before the garden is finished. Focus on a one-to-three-year plan instead.
- Plants from the same family do not compete with each other. You can plant like plants really close together and get a full look faster.



ABOVE: Clematis montana 'Rubens' and Clematis 'Jackmanii' crown the gazebo with a clear view of a pond created to let Grossman experiment with the full spectrum of water lilies. On its banks, wisteria blossoms most of the summer. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Originally, Grossman planned to surround the garden with espaliered apple trees, but a vole invasion scuttled his plans. The rope and pillar fence was an elegant solution to his problem. A 'Royal Purple' smoke tree offsets 'Supreme Cantaloupe' Echinacea. In Grossman's garden, the last vestiges of a former driveway became a crescent-shaped gravel patio adjacent to the sunroom addition. A begonia-filled urn serves as a focal point amid layers of 'Snow Queen' hydrangea, Adenophora confuse, and hostas.