



- [Cocktail Culture](#)

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The Drunken Botanist Plants the Cocktail Seed

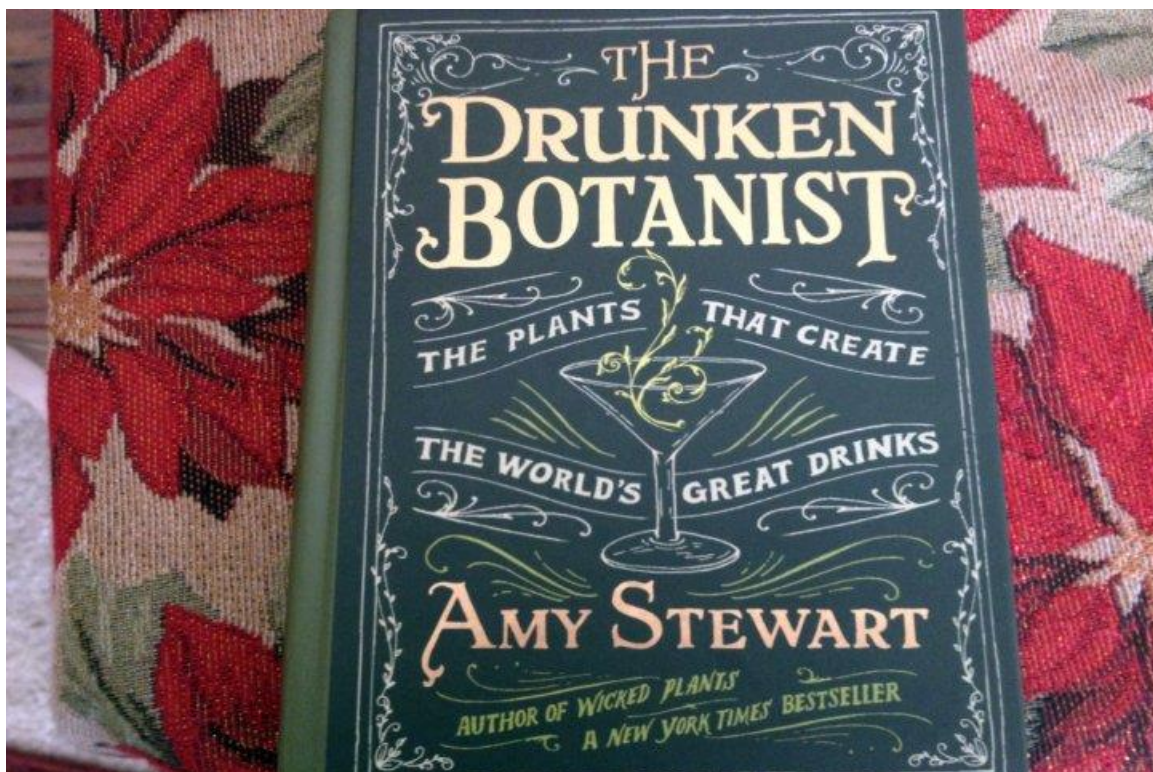
By [Yolanda Evans](#)

Most people wouldn't think of gardening when they think of cocktails but author Amy Stewart teaches that booze and botany go hand in hand — after all, every great drink starts from a plant. Gardening aficionados already know that that most herbs, veggies and fruits grown in your backyard garden could be used to make some fancy drinks at home. But if you lack a green thumb and garden know-how, then Stewart's *The Drunken Botanist* is a great resource to help turn that little dirt patch in your backyard into a fabulous cocktail garden.

“Fortunately, the best cocktail ingredients are also the easiest to grow,” says Stewart. “Start with spearmint, which should be planted in a pot to keep it from taking over the garden. All it needs is ordinary potting soil and water. Choose Mojito mint if you’re making mojitos and Kentucky Colonel for mint juleps. Add cilantro and basil for gin and vodka drinks.”

In the book, Stewart explains how most plants can be turned into functional drinks in three easy steps: fermentation, distillation and mixing. Being that it’s illegal in most cities to distill anything unless you have a license, we suggest that you stick with getting your booze from the liquor store. Even if you can’t distill your favorite spirit, it doesn’t mean that your garden can’t be full of useful ingredients that can be a great foundation to your cocktail making. There are so many endless possibilities, depending on what you desire. You might feel like having just an herb garden or prefer to stick with a garden composed of nothing but fruit and veggie.

“If you’d like to grow your own fruit for cocktails, consider the new BrazelBerry line of container-sized raspberries and blueberries from Fall Creek,” says Stewart. “You could also grow everbearing strawberries in a pot or hanging basket. And for garnishes, I like pansies, violas, and chamomile blossoms, all of which are edible and beautiful in a drink.”



If you have no idea what to grow, then pick up a few packages from the Drunken Botanist Plant & Seed Collection, cocktail-friendly plants created by Stewart and [Territorial Seed Company](#), to get your garden started. The collection includes some great kits like [The Old Tom Gin Collection](#) or [The Southern Belle](#)

[Whiskey Garden](#) that will turn your garden into an outdoor cocktail party. No matter how you decide to do your garden, we rounded up some useful hints from the book that will help you turn your DIY project into something tasty.

Garden-infused simple syrup can be made from almost any botanical ingredient from mint to rhubarb as a base and is a great way to add a twist to a basic recipe. Just fill a clean jar with your plant of choice and then add vodka. Store the concoction until it stands up to your taste standards

If you are out of grenadine, then make your own with a few pomegranates. Peel half-dozen pomegranates, leaving the seeds and membranes intact. Squeeze and filter until you've made about two cups of juice. Pour that into a saucepan, add one to two cups of sugar, simmer and stir in an ounce of vodka, which acts as a preservative. Pour it into a clean jar and store it in the refrigerator, where it will last about a month.

If you're a martini fan, then you know that one bad olive can ruin the drink. Brine your own olives by soaking fresh ones in water for six days, then combining 1 part pickling salt to 10 part water and bring to a boil. Let it cool and then add lemon, garlic, spices or herbs and seal in a jar for four days for a tasty treat for your cocktail.

Who knew gardening could be so intoxicating?

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