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HCDE 318  
10/16/2017

## Project Description

Our group is focusing on creating a tool or resource for gardeners and people who care for plants. Each member of the team has interviewed someone in the gardening community of varying skill. This includes students and professionals who farm various consumable goods, as well as casual gardeners who are looking to beautify their homes. Upon further analysis of our individual interviews, we may find common themes between these different subsets of our user group, or we may change our scope to focus on a more specified user group. Our goal is to create something that will help gardeners be more successful with growing their plants, and to keep them motivated when things don't go perfectly.

## Competing Product

The Joy of Landscaping is a website dedicated to spreading the joy of landscaping [1]. This is achieved through ebook guides to offer guidance in design planning, The Joy of Landscaping Blog [2], and the Perennial Match App. The app is meant to assist gardeners in deciding how to assemble plants in their yard. It's an extremely visual app, with vibrant and descriptive images of the plants.

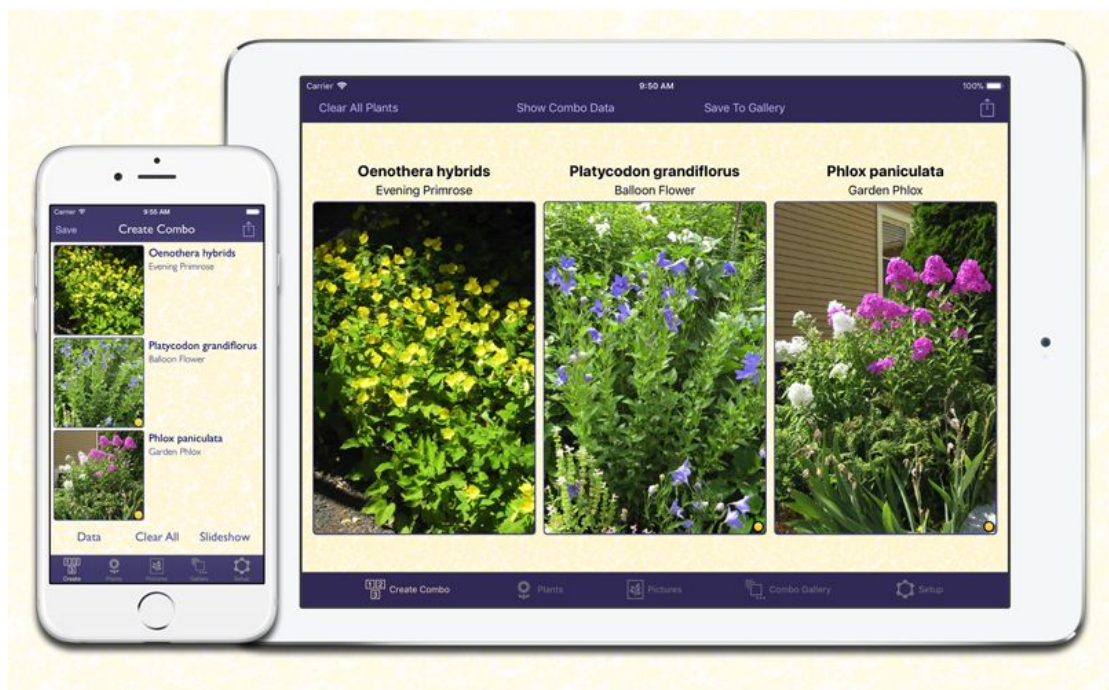


Fig 1. Home page of Perennial Match app, allowing user to browse images of plants.

One particularly unique feature of this app is that users can create combinations of plants to use in a close setting, so users can compare plants on metrics of how much sunlight it needs, watering required, and height of the plant. From what I learned in the interview, this is an extremely helpful tool. One thing that would make his feature more helpful is if the app could generate a list of plants that would grow well with a selected plant.

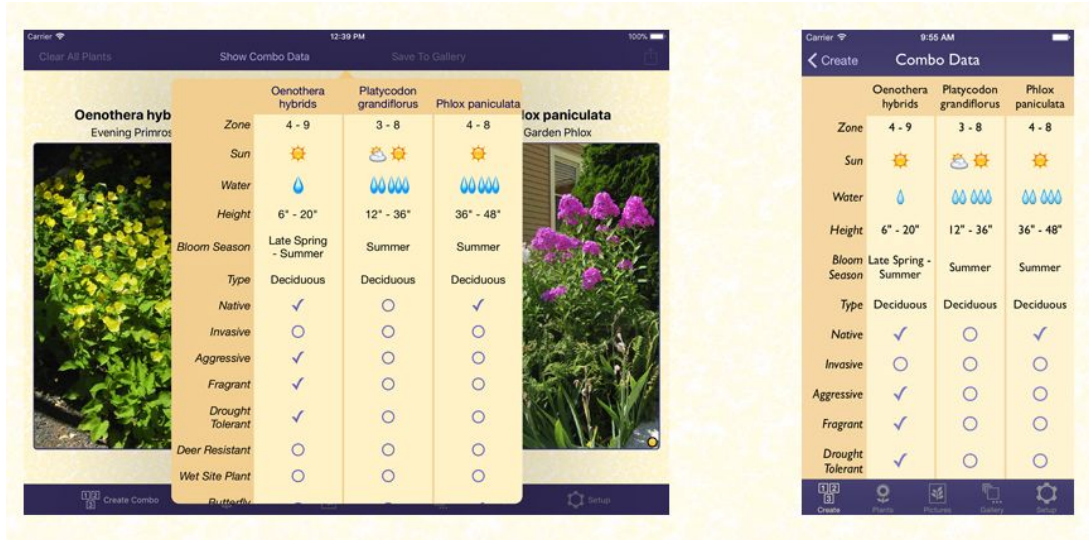


Fig 2. "Combo" feature of Perennial Match app. Users add multiple plants to a "Combo Group", which allows for the comparison of plants based on a variety of metrics.

The feature of Perennial Match that makes up for this is the detailed search/filter system. Users can search for different types of plants using the metrics of sunlight, water, color, and if they have special "abilities" like being drought tolerant or attracting butterflies.



Fig 3. The filter settings to view plants. Each of these categories can be specified or don't have to be search filters.

Overall, this is an app that would meet the needs of users who are beginning gardeners with a goal of building a yard that looks beautiful and grows plants that will grow well together. This app would not meet the need of professional farmers, though, because the app features plants that are for decoration and not for consumable plants like fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

### **Interview**

1. What got you interested in gardening?
  - Did someone get you interested or did you find it on your own?
  - What do you get out of gardening?
2. What's your favorite thing to use while gardening?
  - tools, online resources, apps, books, etc.
3. Experience Level?
  - How long have you been gardening?
  - Difficulty of things you grow?
4. Hobby or profession?
5. Do you have a specialty? (Do you grow something specific?)
6. What has been your most frustrating experience with gardening?
  - What helps you to persevere when you get frustrated? (resources/tools/personal motivation)
  - What do you do to solve these frustrations?
7. What would your ideal tool or resource to help you garden look/work like?

### **Transcript**

**E:** Emily

**I:** Interviewee

**E:** Can you tell me about the start of your gardening when you moved into your most recent home?

**I:** So we just bought our first home, we had been in apartments and so all of our plants have just been in pots inside the apartment. So first house, we moved in March of 2016 and it's a pretty good sized yard. It had a lot of rock around the borders and in the yard, and it was pea gravel. We decided we didn't like that and so I spent my whole summer out there hauling gravel out. We were making Facebook posts asking people if they wanted free rocks. They could come and get free rocks with us. We got all the rock out, and it was really bad soil in there, so we brought in what's called "Moo Doo". It's a mix of cow manure and different organic material so we could get the soil going. Then we started buying plants to put into the yard and we don't really have a plan for them. We've been going to the nursery and saying "Oh that's a pretty plant" and then we figure out where we want to put it. Most of the plants have been going around the border of the yard. There's some areas that look better than others where the plants have filled in, because it was kind of designed and it's dense. There's some places with not as

much stuff, so next year we'll be working on putting in more stuff. We've been buying some trees - Japanese maples, we've been putting them into the yard. We've also been buying big pots to put stuff into. My wife has been pretty good about doing pot arrangements and getting plants that will go well together in there. She has the nickname "the transplanter" because she'll plant something then decide it's not quite right so she moves it to a different place, then sometimes move it back to its original place. That's where we're at. We're spending a fair amount of money at the nursery and spending a lot of time outside.

**E:** Do you have a specific goal in mind?

**I:** I think the goal for the front yard is -- like I said we got rid of all the rock there -- just looking pretty, add some color to the front yard, increase the "curb appeal". Then for the backyard we have that area in the back northeast corner of the yard has a cement slab with some dirt borders around it. We want to make that a pretty lush environment with plants that have some height of them, some vines. We have some [trellaces ?] back there, we got tropical jungle kind of feel back there. So that's one of the few areas where we have a plan.

**E:** What kind of resources do you use when you're thinking about what plants will live close together?

**I:** That's more mywife deciding what gets planted where, but she says I have a knack for picking out fun plants. We subscribe to Fine Gardener magazine, they have some good examples. Sunset magazine we subscribe to, I'm sure that we're on a couple facebook groups about gardening-- West Seattle gardening is a group that we belong to. We hear people talking about different things, and we hear questions that other people ask so we listen in on that. People talk about what tends to grow well around here. Those are the sort of resources we use right now. Also we go to Swansons or west seattle nursery so we can talk to people, and see the arrangements they have. We say "Oh that's pretty", and the nursery put it together so hopefully they go well together. Same kind of soil, same amount of water and sunlight, things like that.

**E:** How would you describe your experience level?

**I:** I would say total beginner, amatuer. I really don't know what I'm doing.

**E:** Still keeping things alive though?

**I:** Yes, we haven't killed too many things. We've had to move some things around, you just learn by doing it. You learn "Oh that plant doesn't like that much sun, it's really wilting up" so you move it or re-pot it to a place where it gets more shade. Definitely beginner.

**E:** Do you have an example of a plant that's been doing really well?

**I:** We have some St. John's wort in our front yard and I've been really surprised at how well it's growing and how pretty it is, it's got pretty yellow flowers on it and these dark red almost black looking berries on them. They've grown really well so we're going to get some more to put on the other side of the house. That's been the thing that's been growing the best. Plants that we bought that we've really been enjoying. There's also a plant I bought, I don't know the name of it, but it looks really funky. It's probably grown to be 4 or 5 feet tall. It's just got little shoots that come off of it. That one's pretty cool, I don't know the name of it though. It's pretty Dr. Suess looking.

**E:** On the opposite side of things, have you had any frustrations in growing plants?

**I:** Frustrations...aside from my dog chewing some of the plants up and digging holes in the front yard. I think the price of things is a little bit astonishing, we've spent a fair amount of money on plants at the nursery and pots -- pots cost a lot when you start buying nice pots -- and soil. It's been a lot of hard work. The first batch of Moo Doo I got, I drove my truck down to the Moo Doo place, and filled up the back bed with my shovel, and unloaded it the same way at my house. The next couple times we had delivery. A little dump truck came by our yard and just dumped it all there. So that was a learning process right there. Other frustrations...the dog trampling stuff. We've bought some stuff from Costco and have not had great luck with the plants we've bought from there. They just dry up and we've lost about all the plants we've bought from there. Yeah, that's probably the big thing, spending money on plants, specifically at Costco when they die.

**E:** What motivates you to continue despite these setbacks?

I think that now that we're homeowners and we have a dog -- the dog is relatively new, we just got the dog in December -- that we tend to not go out to eat as much and spend more time at the house, in the space we're investing in. We just want to beautify it, make it look good. It's rewarding to think about what the yard, or an area of the yard looked like at the beginning of the season or even when we first moved in. You see stuff growing and doing well, it's rewarding. You sit on the porch and drink a beer and you think "wow your yard looks great".

**I:** If you were to design an ideal tool that were to help you currently or when you were first starting, what would that do?

**E:** Like an app?

**I:** Doesn't have to be, it could be a physical tool, or an app if that's what would be helpful.

**E:** I think it would be pretty good if you...I guess there might be something like this out there that you could plug in what your temperate zone is -- the climate that you live in -- and maybe visually scroll through things and pick it. Then the app or the website could populate and show you what types of plants go well with that, maybe they require the same amount of watering or

similar types of sunlight, so you know that these could be easily planted together and they can be cared for easily, and that you could drag and drop them next to each other so see if you like the texture or the color and create your own little scenes. I think that would be pretty cool.

### **Referenes**

1. The Joy of Landscaping. Retrieved from <http://joyoflandscaping.delora.com>
2. The Joy of Landscaping Blog. Retrieved from [http://joyoflandscaping.delora.com/jol\\_blog/](http://joyoflandscaping.delora.com/jol_blog/)