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Your Indoor Outdoor guide to gardening **MAY**

PLANTING A VEGETABLE GARDEN

Most areas in the Northeast and Middle Atlantic can still have a killing frost through mid to late May. So to be safe, wait till the last week of May to plant warm season crops in the ground; tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, etc.

Before you plant, make sure that you have a plan ready. Think of the vegetables you actually like to eat & determine which ones you have enough room to grow. Estimate the number of plants that you need of each crop for fresh and preserved (canned, frozen, dried) use. Then do a planting arrangement based on crop rotation (don't place the same or related plants in the same area in consecutive years) and companion planting. Plants have garden friends and garden adversaries, tomatoes like being next to peppers, carrots, asparagus, & cucumbers, but keep them away from pole beans & potatoes.

Ever consider planting heirloom vegetable varieties? Many of your fellow gardeners plant old time tomatoes, cucumbers, beets, etc. They taste great, help preserve out seed diversity, and bring back childhood memories. Both seeds and plants are now easier to find & a number of local nurseries carry at least a few heirlooms. Check them out – you'll be happily surprised.

Give your plants a good soaking when you put them in and keep them well watered for the first few weeks. If you have a raised bed garden, you will need to water more often, although watering still depends on the amount of rain. Soaker hoses & hand watering conserve water & will cause less stress to plants than relying strictly on rain.

Two or so inches of mulch in your garden, added when you in transplants or after seedlings are several inches high, will help preserve moisture later in the summer and preserve your back by cutting down on weeds. But be careful not to smother small plants!

By Julia Marano, Penn State Master Gardener

FLOWERING THIS MONTH

- ❖ Annuals and perennials: Amsonia, Astilbe, barren-strawberries, basket-of-gold, bee balms, bellflowers, Bergenia, bleeding hearts, bloody cranesbills, blue phloxes, Calendula, candytuft, Celandine poppies, cowslips, dame's rockets, Epimedium, forget-me-nots, foxgloves, Geranium, cool season grasses, hellebores, Labrador violets, lady's mantle, lungworts, moss-pinks, pansies, peonies, periwinkles, creeping phloxes, Ranunculus, rock-cress, snapdragons, speedwells, stocks, sweet woodruff, thyme, Virginia bluebells, wallflowers.
- ❖ Bulbs: Anemone, daffodils, grape-hyacinths, hyacinths, irises, ornamental onions, snowflakes, tulips.
- ❖ Native Wildflowers, baneberry, bluebead lily, bleeding hearts, columbines, foam flowers, Geranium, Heuchera, Indian paint brush, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, wild lupine, May apple, obedient plant, Penstemon, Solomon's seals, spring beauty, violets.
- ❖ Shrubs and Trees: apple trees, azaleas, bearberries, blueberries, broom, red buckeye, Calycanthus, crabapple trees, Daphne, dogwoods, Deutzia, Enkianthus, Euphorbia, Fothergilla, golden-chain trees, hawthorns, Hydrangea, lilacs, mountain laurels, Oregon grape holly, Japanese and mountain pieris, Potentilla, quince, redbuds, Rhododendron, roses, Sassafras, silverbells, Spiraea, Burkwood viburnums, Wisteria.

HOUSEPLANTS

- ❖ Divide indoor plants after new growth begins.
- ❖ Root cuttings of many plants now.
- ❖ Move plants outdoors when the night temperatures stay over 50°F. Place them in a shady area and gradually move them to their preferred light level as they adapt to the brighter outdoor light.

BULBS

- ❖ Allow the leaves of your spring bulbs (daffodils, tulips, etc.) to brown after flowering. The leaves need to remain to nourish the bulb for next year's flowers.
- ❖ Plant tender bulbs of dahlias, tuberous begonias, gladioli.

COMPOST

- ❖ Start a new compost pile or bin if you do not have one.
- ❖ Maintain "food" (garden trimmings), moisture, and keep pile turned.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

- ❖ In most areas, it is best to wait until May 15 or even Memorial Day, to plant summer crops of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, limas, squash, and other warm season vegetables.
- ❖ Apply 2 inches of mulch to plants after soaking the ground, but avoid overwatering and do not cover small plants.
- ❖ Slugs may be a problem for seedlings and transplants, check plants in the evening around 10:00 PM with a flash light to confirm this. Setting out small pans of yeast and water, or beer will act as slug bait.

SMALL FRUITS

- ❖ Apply fungicide spray for blooms of strawberries, brambles, blueberries, and grapes.
- ❖ Scout for insect and disease problems.

TREE FRUITS

- ❖ Continue sprays and scouting.
- ❖ Bring in bees for pollination.

HERBS

- ❖ Plant annual, biennials and perennial herbs outdoors for use in food, as phytomedicinals, or for decoration.

LAWNS

- ❖ Mow your lawn regularly, generally once a week, but adapt this to the type of grass and how fast it is growing.
- ❖ New lawns can still be sown and older ones reseeded before summer heat takes its toll.
- ❖ If you did not apply fertilizer earlier this spring along with an herbicide and turf growth is slowing down, you can fertilize to maintain its color and health. A general application rate is 0.75 to 1 lbs. of N per 1000 sq. ft. with fertilizer that has at least 50% slow release N. Best to schedule prior to a rain or irrigate after applying.
- ❖ Grackles and starlings feeding in lawns may indicate infestation of sod webworms.

PERENNIALS, BIENNIALS & ANNUALS

- ❖ Seedlings started indoors (or purchased) can be moved to the garden in mid to late May.
- ❖ Divide crowded perennials if they are still small and have not set flower buds.
- ❖ Sow seed in the ground of sunflowers, cosmos, and other direct seeded annuals for summer flowers.
- ❖ Begin to stake weak-stemmed perennials like delphiniums when they are 6-8" tall.
- ❖ Avoid planting any of the loosestrifes, as they can become a serious weed and destroy the habitat of native plants and animals.

TREES & SHRUBS

- ❖ Keep newly planted conifers well watered.
- ❖ Deciduous trees can still be planted before summer heat makes it inadvisable.
- ❖ Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after they flower.
- ❖ Add more nitrogen fertilizer to areas where fresh wood chips or bark mulch is added.
- ❖ Avoid damage to trees and shrubs from lawn mowers and string trimmers.
- ❖ To help prevent nuisance fruit from ornamental crabapples, apply sprays to remove the fruit within 30 days of full bloom. Timing is critical.
- ❖ Watch for caterpillars eating the needles off pine trees, they are often the larvae of sawflies.

ROSES

- ❖ Prune out deadwood.
- ❖ Water regularly, especially roses planted this spring.
- ❖ Apply 2-3 inches of mulch to help retain water.
- ❖ Fertilize as indicated by a soil test.

WATER GARDENS

- ❖ Water lilies can be divided now. Algae bloom will go away when tropical and hardy plants begin leafing out.