



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club

Helpful Hints

May – 2024

May is a great month for planting, but the weather can be changeable. Be aware of the weather forecasts and storm warnings to protect your plants. Plant annuals after Mother’s Day which is our safety date. So, let’s get out and get growing!

Things to do in the garden...

Mulching and Watering

- If cold weather or frost is predicted, protect your tender plants with mulch, newspapers, light cloth, plastic covering or some type of overnight protection.
- Be sure to remove coverings as soon as the danger of frost is over or your plants will bake in the sun.
- If the weather is sunny and dry, remember to water! Most flowers and shrubs need about an inch of water each week to perform well, and newly planted seedlings especially, will perish if their roots are allowed to dry out.

Caring for Shrubs and Trees

- It's still not too late to fertilize your trees and shrubs.
- Use a rhododendron or evergreen type of plant food to feed evergreens and other acid loving plants like azaleas and rhododendrons, junipers, etc.
- use an all-purpose garden fertilizer (10-10-10) to feed roses, deciduous shrubs and trees.

- Be sure to water in the fertilizer thoroughly after it is applied.
- Work lime into the soil around your hydrangeas to produce pink flowers or Aluminum Sulphate for blue blooms. Be sure to read the label for accurate measurement and application.

Pruning

- Early flowering deciduous shrubs such as forsythia, weigela, and spirea should be pruned back when they have finished blooming.
- Cut back a third of the oldest canes to ground level, then cut back one third of the remaining branches by one third of their height.
- Remove the wilting seed heads from rhododendrons and azaleas so that the plant's energy can go to foliage growth and next year's flowers, rather than seeds.
- Remove any sucker growths from fruit trees as soon as they appear.
- Keep an eye on the roses. Spray them for aphids and other pests and diseases such as black spot.
- Pinch off the new growth 'candles' of pines and other conifers to keep them to a compact size.
- Lilacs should be pruned lightly after they finish blooming, removing sucker growths and dead blooms.
- Feed lilacs in May with a good all-purpose 10-10-10 fertilizer after they have finished blooming.

Caring for Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs

- Dahlias, gladiolas, lilies, cannas and other summer flowering bulbs can be planted this month.
- Gladiolas bulbs may be planted at 2 week increments until the first of July to provide you with cut flowers until the first frost.
- Delphiniums, phlox, daylilies, carnations, candytuft, primroses, coral bells and other summer flowering perennials can all be set into the garden any time in May.
- Break off wilting tulip or daffodil heads but continue to feed and care for the plants until the foliage has died back naturally.

- Old plantings of Daffodils may be divided and moved when they have finished blooming, but treat them as growing plants and use care to protect the foliage and roots.
- Water them thoroughly after transplanting. Only dig or move other spring flowering bulbs once their foliage has ripened and died back.
- Pansies, snapdragons, dianthus, petunias, geraniums, and impatiens should be ready to plant by mid-month. Toward the end of the month, it should be warm enough to plant out the more tender annuals like salvia, zinnias and marigolds.
- Lightly side dress perennials with an all-purpose 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer. Avoid spilling the fertilizer on the plant, and use care not to damage the shallow roots when you cultivate it into the soil.
- Set stakes next to your taller flowers early in the season to help support the plant against winds as they grow.
- Unless you intend to harvest the seeds from annual plants, it's best to deadhead spent blooms to encourage further blooming through the summer.

Fruit and Vegetable Gardening

- Carrots, Lettuce, Potatoes, corn, beans and peas can be seeded or planted into the vegetable garden at any time now.
- Wait until mid to late May before planting the warmer weather crops like tomatoes, squash, cucumber, peppers and pumpkins.
- You may see the first fruit on your strawberries late this month. Be sure to provide some protective netting over them.
- Newly planted strawberries should have the blossoms picked off until they become well established.

Caring for the Lawn

- May is a good month to repair your lawn. Fill in the bare spots by slightly loosening surface of the soil and sow a good quality lawn seed over the area evenly.

- Tamp the seed in gently and water. Keep the patch moist by covering with light mulch of lawn clippings.
- This is the time to eliminate lawn weeds by hand pulling, or apply a “weed and feed” fertilizer.... before they go to seed!
- Set your mower for a higher cut during the spring months to help the grass to grow in fuller and help choke out the weeds.

Caring and Maintaining House Plants

- Check to see if your house plants are rootbound. Water them thoroughly and carefully remove them from their pots. If the roots have compacted around the outside of the root ball, it’s time to repot.
- Carefully examine your house plants for pests and problems. It is much easier to fight an insect infestation or disease in its early stages than to wait.
- As the growth rate of your houseplants changes with the seasons, adjust your feeding schedule to provide additional food. Feed your plants a good all-purpose house plant food at half of the manufacturer’s recommended rates, increasing the proportion slightly to accommodate growth spurts.
- Overuse of fertilizers can cause root and foliage burn, as well as the death of the plant.
- Mist your plants regularly. This adds to the humidity, keeps the leaves cleaner and healthier, and helps to prevent spider mites.

Source:

The Garden Helper, “Gardening in the Merry Month of May,” thegardenhelper.com

Happy Gardening!