

May in the Garden

Planning

Design an informal "Cottage" garden. Flowers grow in free-flowing drifts mixed with herbs and even vegetables, creating a relaxed casual appearance. This offers the perfect gift of fresh herbs for cooking and flower bouquets to brighten your home or to share with a neighbor.

Tackle lawn weed problems in May and continue to mow regularly. Do not use weed and feed products near trees and shrubs.

You can still core aerate an existing lawn. You can also overseed an old lawn or plant a new one.

Sow hardy annual flowers outdoors in early May (sweet alyssum, bachelor buttons, calendula, cosmos, sweet peas). Wait until after the last frost (average May 15) and the soil has warmed before planting tender annuals (marigolds, portulaca, zinnias).

Lawn and Garden

Put bedding plants in moist, fertile soil after breaking apart their roots, especially if they have grown tightly against the edges of their pots or cell packs. Keep them well watered.

If summer and fall-blooming perennials have become overgrown, dig them up and divide them before new growth is six inches high. Pot up and offer the extras to a community garden or to a community fundraiser.

Check for aphids on your plants. Roses, arborvitae, firs and maples are prone to this pest. Look for distorted new growth, honeydew (sticky sap) and sooty mold on the leaves. Wash foliage with a strong spray of water or insecticidal soap.

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Lawn and Garden continued...

Mulch your garden beds to help control weeds and to conserve water. A 2-4" layer of bark or compost helps retain moisture in the soil.

Set out Hummingbird feeders. Make your own nectar by using 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Bring water to boil, add sugar and stir until dissolved. Cool nectar before filling clean feeders. Store the remaining nectar in your refrigerator for up to one week.

Planting

Start pumpkins and melon seeds for transplants to the garden. These plants don't like their roots being disturbed so use peat pots or make newspaper pots for them.

Continue planting leafy greens, beets and carrots in small amounts for a staggered harvest.

Plant a container garden. Use the largest pots you can and quality potting soil. Never use soil from the garden as it is too dense. Try planting containers with plant combinations you've never thought of, such as sweet potato vine, asparagus ferns, marguerite daisies and New Zealand flax. Some nice ones for shade are big-leaf coleus, tuberous begonias or impatiens. Vegetables mixed with flowers are also a lovely combination.

Fertilize container plants every other week with a weak water-soluble fertilizer solution. Nutrients leach out from a container rapidly and your plants will flourish if you replace them.

Area Farmer Markets are open.
Join the festivities of music, food and craft vendors, fresh produce and garden plants for purchase while supporting local growers.