

From the Ground Up

Volume 108 Issue 2 • Editor: Karin Woltjer, Master Gardener • May 2008

May Garden Calendar

May's note.....

Garden beds should be prepared for the seeds and transplants you have decided to grow this season. If uncertain of the quality of your soil, a soil test is a good idea before planting. Be certain to harden off any young transplants before placing them in the garden.

4 Start warm season melons indoors			5 Harden off seedlings before planting	6 Prune shrub and tree broken branches. Reshape summer-flowering shrubs by pruning.	7 ID grassy weeds in garden and lawn. Weed	8 Deal with dandelions	9 When lilacs stop blooming, remove faded blooms and suckers, and reshape bushes by pruning	10 Attend Minnehaha Master Gardeners' plant sale from 9-11 a.m. at the Fairgrounds
11 Observe your trees. Any problems?			12 Prune roses—cut out deadwood and crossing canes.	13 Control cabbage worms by picking off by hand or spray with Bt (<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>)	14 Last frost date	15 Buy a garden journal and keep weather records along with garden records	16 Continue deadheading from spring flowering bulbs. Leave foliage in place until yellow	17 Plant a container garden
18 Newly planted nursery stock need 1" of rain per week. Supplement if necessary			19 Landscape with edible plants	20 Plant tomatoes	21 Plant beans	22 Plant cucumbers	23 Plan for Memorial Day weekend	24 Plant summer squash
25 Plant winter squash			26 Plant peppers	27 Plant corn	28 Watering roses with soaker hoses reduces spread of black spot disease.	29 Pinch back mums to promote bushiness	30 Acclimate houseplants to the outdoors	31 Mulch garden beds

Resources for Gardeners.....

Wonderful Websites...

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/>

http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/pac_ctnt_988/text/0,,HGTV_22056_43845.00.html

<http://www.pallensmith.com/>



Recent Reads...

The Great Seed Mystery for Kids, By Peggy Henry, ISBN 1-880281-11-2

Container Gardening for Kids, By Ellen Talmage, ISBN 0-8069-1378-9

The New Gardener, By Pippa Greenwood, ISBN 0-914697-69

From the  Ground Up

is published monthly during the growing season by the Minnehaha County Extension, 220 West 6th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57104
Phone 605-367-7877
Fax 605-367-4609



Lawn Care

Mowing has a major impact on lawn appearance and health. Homeowners need to follow a few simple guidelines:

1. Blade height. One very common mistake is mowing lawns too short. For most lawns, a mowing height between 2 to 3 inches is suggested; the upper range is best for summer. Lawns mowed at higher heights have deeper roots, less weed problems, and look much better. Mowing too close invites problems such as weed invasions.

Raising the mowing height can have a major impact on the quality of many home lawns. A height of 2 inches is fine when grasses are rapidly growing, but the height should be raised as growth slows, heat stress increases, and when the lawn is in shade. The first mowing before green-up could be slightly lower than normal. Remember not to remove more than 1/3 of the grass leaf in any one cutting. Mowing on a regular basis as the lawn needs it is essential.

2. Clippings. Should clippings should be collected? As long as the lawn is mowed on a regular basis and the clippings readily filter back down into the lawn, they do not need to be collected. Returned in this manner, clippings readily decompose and do not cause thatch. Clippings recycle nutrients too, particularly nitrogen, so less fertilizer is needed.

3. Mowing. Selecting a mower can involve a number of factors with many being personal preference. Rotary mowers are the most widely used type on home lawns. Both conventional rotary mowers with bag attachments and mulching mowers are readily available for homeowners. Studies have found that mulching mowers did not provide additional benefit over conventional rotary mowers returning clippings assuming proper mowing frequency and lawn fertilizing was followed. With whatever mower type that you select, blades need to be kept sharp.

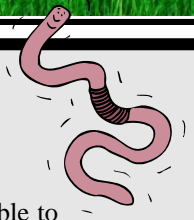


Mow in the direction that is safest. Periodically change directions if desired. Mowing the same direction each time should not be a problem on taller turf typical of home lawns. The first and last mowing of the year should be at a height of about 2 inches. Avoid scalping in spring and excessively high grass at the end of fall.



the ABC's of Gardening.....

by Bonnie Lynch, Master Gardener

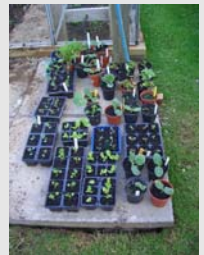


E...Earthworm—A terrestrial member of the phylum Annelida. Earthworms are very valuable to the garden because they transform organic material into humus – a plant food and soil conditioner. They are regarded as a helpmate by aerating soil (allowing air and water to penetrate) and depositing castings as organic fertilizer. If you don't see worms when you dig in your garden, your soil is lacking organic matter. Add more compost.

F...Fertilizer—Plants need food to grow and thrive. Gardeners often add fertilizers to their gardens to keep their plants healthy and vigorous. Organic or inorganic plant foods are used to amend the soil in order to improve the quality or quantity of plant growth. Common organic fertilizers are manure, fish emulsion, compost and blood meal. Inorganic fertilizers may be dry, liquid, pelleted, and slow-release. The familiar listings of three numbers (such as 5-10-10) on commercial products indicate the percentage of nitrogen (which makes plants lush and green), phosphorus (which stimulates root growth and is essential for photosynthesis) and potassium (which promotes plant health by aiding in stem growth and chemical reactions within the plant).

G...Growing Season—A growing season is the number of days between the average date of the last killing frost in spring and the first killing frost in fall. Vegetables and certain plants require a minimum number of days to reach maturity, so be sure your growing season is long enough for the selections you wish to grow.

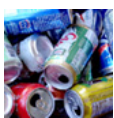
H...Hardening Off—Hardening off is the process of gradually acclimatizing greenhouse or indoor grown plants to outdoor growing conditions before transplanting. Normally, the plants are placed in a sheltered and sunny outside location, for a few hours at a time, during the day. They are then returned to the house, greenhouse or garage each night. The time outside should be extended each day until the risk of frost has passed and the plant can be moved to a permanent outside location. The hardening off process should continue for one to two weeks before transplanting.



Tips and Tricks, Quotes and Notes.....

by Bonnie Lynch, Master Gardener

A tip for keeping handtools handy. Most avid gardeners tend to need several tools when working in the garden or around the yard. A two-pocket carpenter's apron can easily accommodate a trowel, scissors, twine, pruners, seed packets, etc.



A trick to save on potting soil. Instead of filling large pots and containers with expensive and heavy potting soil, simply place lightweight aluminum pop cans (or something similar) in the bottom of the container to "take up space" before adding the soil.

A quote from Vincent Van Gogh "If you truly love Nature, you will find beauty everywhere."



PURPLE GOES WITH EVERYTHING

by Cleone Thompson, Master Gardener



It really is such a versatile color to work with in your landscaping. Purple can be toned down with pastels or brightened with other vivid colors. Warmer tones lean towards violet and cooler tones towards blues.

At our SD home, one of my favorite purple lilacs is the French hybrid 'Sensation' with its colorful single purple florets edged with pure white. During the summer, a Common Smoke Bush is interesting when its blooms fade to fluffy stems resembling puffs of smoke. A Diablo Ninebark bush becomes a great backdrop with its deep purple foliage to flower beds of Yarrow, Cone Flowers, and Rudbekia.

Other perennials with purple foliage or flowers that I have had good luck with in my flower beds are:

Euphorbia dulcis Chameleon (Cushion Spurge)

Salvia nemorosa 'May Night' (Meadow Sage)

Heuchera 'Palace Purple' or 'Amethyst Mist' (Coral Bells)

Husker Red Penstemon

Echinacea purpurea (Cone Flowers)

Cimicifuga ramosa 'Hillside Black Beauty' (Snakeroot)

Sedum 'Purple Emperor'

Salvia lyrata 'Purple Knockout' (Lyreleaf Sage)

Chives

Lamium maculatum 'Chequers' (False Salvia)

Perovskia atriplicifolia (Russian Sage)

Geraniums, several varieties, 'New Hampshire Purple', 'Orion'

'Variegated Jacob's Ladder', 'Snow & Sapphires', or 'Brise D'Anjou'

Liatis spicata 'Kobold'

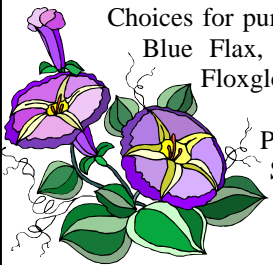
Iris pallida 'Albo-Variegata'

Aster novibelgii 'Professor Kippenberg'

Agastache rugosa 'Honey Bee Blue' (Mexican Mint)

Mallow purpurea

Echinops Ritro (Globe Thistle)



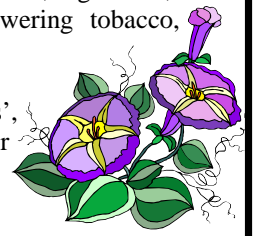
Choices for purple annuals are abundant in Petunias, Zinnias, Verbena, Alyssum, Moss Roses, Statice, Ageratum, False Blue Flax, Sweet Peas, Canterbury bells, Impatiens, Snapdragons, Angel's Trumpet, Flowering tobacco, Floxglove, Spider flower, Morning Glories, etc....

I liked these annuals for a different look in my flowerbeds last year:

Perilla 'Magehlanica', Eggplant 'Purple Blush', 'Black Beauty', and 'Little Fingers',

Sun Coleus, Ornamental Millet 'Purple Majesty', Basil 'Purple Ruffles', and Castor

Beans (seeds are poisonous).



Catchall

At the Minnehaha County Master Gardeners booth at the 2008 Lawn and Garden Show, a visitor asked what he could do to have a sweet corn crop because he did not have a crop last year. Let's review steps in planting sweet corn. When planting sweet corn, purchase only fresh seed. Sweet corn seed is relatively short-lived (two years) even under ideal conditions.

Sweet corn will grow well on almost any well-drained soil although deep, sandy loams with adequate organic matter are best. The best time to fertilize the entire garden is before planting so that nutrients can be worked in to the soil. Improper or excessive fertilization, especially with nitrogen, can cause excessive vegetative growth and reduce yields of fruiting vegetables. To prevent cross-pollination by unwanted varieties (field corn with sweet corn or standard sweet corn with super sweet corn), varieties should be separated by at least 250 ft or more.

Sweet corn is a warm-weather crop requiring at least eight hours of direct sunlight daily. Seed can be planted at or after the average date for the last killing frost. Soil temperature (in the upper 3") should be about 60° F and slightly higher for super sweet varieties. Sweet corn should be planted in blocks at least three to four rows wide for good pollination. In the home garden, a block of corn should have at least nine plants.

Sweet corn requires frequent watering to produce full, healthy ears. Once the tassels appear, you should be watering at least one inch of water per week. Make sure the soil does not dry out between watering. If your area is experiencing particularly hot and dry weather, make sure to compensate by watering more frequently. Corn will not do well when exposed to prolonged drought.

You should cultivate around the corn to remove weeds. Weeds and debris attract pests so remove litter when you can. It is not recommended to cut the suckers around your corn because these suckers have nothing to do with yields or quality. Weed frequently.



Odds and Ends

By Chris Zdorovtsov-Horticulture Extension Educator

Hello! I am Chris, the new Extension Educator here in Minnehaha County. I am very excited to be working in my home state and am ready to assist you with your horticulture needs! I am originally from Yankton, SD. I went to college at Iowa State and then moved to Ohio where I trialed vegetable varieties for a few years. I came back to South Dakota and attended SDSU. I know spring lawn care & gardening are on your mind, so feel free to call with your questions.

- * **Frost Free Dates:** There is a 90% probability that the last freezing temperature (32°F) will occur May 12-May 18 in Davison, Minnehaha, and Yankton counties. Brookings, Beadle, and Lyman counties are primarily May 19-May 24. Much of central and western South Dakota ranges from May 19–June 6. Check out this website from the South Dakota Office of Climatology for more details on your specific location. http://climate.sdstate.edu/w_info/frost/frost.asp

Just remember every year is different! Last year I had frost damage in my garden plot in Brookings, SD over Memorial Day! Take precautions to protect your tender transplants when frost is predicted.

- * **Cool Season Vegetable Planting:** Some crops can survive mild frost and actually do not grow well in hot weather. The optimal soil temperature for spinach, peas, radishes, cauliflower and head lettuce is 60-65 °F (minimum of 40-45 °F). Broccoli, carrots, onions, leaf lettuce, turnips, cabbage, potatoes and beets have the same temperature requirements, but they will tolerate some hot weather.



South Dakota State University, South Dakota Counties and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating South Dakota State University is an Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity Employer (Male/Female) and offers all benefits, services, education, and employment opportunities without regard for ancestry, age, race, citizenship, color, creed, religion, gender, disability, national origin, sexual preference, or Vietnam Era veteran status.

**MINNEHAHA COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE
220 WEST 6TH STREET
SIOUX FALLS SD 57104-6001**

**NON PROFIT ORGRANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 7804
SIOUX FALLS SD**