

## Garden tips for May 2011

April has provided us with plenty of showers to wet our grounds and as May roars in we have our work cut out for us! Weeds, weeds, weeds, and more weeds! Let's roll up our sleeves, spray our arms and legs with bug spray, cut the grass and get to work on making a beautiful lawn and garden for the summer. There is still plenty of time to plant annuals and perennials for spring and summer color! Here's the list of things to do now.

- Fertilize centipede lawns. One application per year is all that is required.
- Fertilize and water tomatoes regularly.
- Plant tropical vines at your mailboxes or trellis for bright flowers and color. Mandevilla, bougainvillea, etc.
- Freshen mulch in planting areas. It helps to regulate soil temperature, conserve moisture, control weeds.
- Begin succession planting of hot weather annuals such as zinnias, marigolds, celosia, etc in May and continue through the month of June.
- Pinch back annuals to encourage bushy, compact growth. Begin to fertilize them on a regular basis.
- Great time to plant long blooming perennials like daylilies, purple coneflowers, Shasta daisies, etc.
- Plant dahlia tubers at the end of May. Also set your stakes in the ground too.
- Continue to plant perennials throughout the month.
- When ground temperature is 70 degrees F. began planting vegetables. Okra, pumpkins, sweet potato, eggplant, pepper plants, watermelon, peas, butterbeans, and tomato.
- It's too late to sow cool season grasses such as fescue, but warm season grasses such as Bermuda, centipede, and zoysia can be sown now.
- Use weed killer on lawns only if temperature is above 70 degrees F.
- Fertilize roses in May to encourage a second bloom, and continue feeding them on schedule through the month of June. Prune ramblers in June.
- Fertilize azaleas as soon as they finish blooming. Prune lightly if necessary.
- Fertilize flower beds with Dynamite, Osmocote, or Miracle Grow.
- Use Amdro on fire ant mounds, then treat mounds with insecticide 48 hours later.
- Use ironite on shrubs and trees to promote healthy color and promote root growth.

Ann's Seven Steps to succeed in growing a beautiful garden:

1. **Select the Spot**  
Consider the amount of sunlight and moisture the spot receives. Does it slope, is it flat, will the plant you're choosing like those conditions?  
Effort saving Tip:  
Build a raised bed to make it easier to maintain, saving your back or compacting the soil by walking on it.
2. **Get Started**  
Fun begins now. Gather gloves, shovel, spade, wheelbarrow and sand, flour, or spray paint to mark your area. Remove grass or weeds growing in area you're planting and place in compost pile.  
Effort saving Tip:  
Invest in quality tools. If shovel blade is sharp, it slices soil better and makes less work for you.
3. **Prepare your Soil**  
Plants thrive and reach their potential in quality soil. Check to see how moist it is, how well it drains.

Money Saving Tip:

Organic matter, such as compost, improves any kind of soil by helping water drain through clay, and makes sandy soil hold more moisture and nutrients. Be sure to use your homemade compost in your new garden so you don't have to spend as much money on other amendments.

4. Best Shopping Tips

Shopping is one of the best parts of gardening. But before you jump in the car, make a list of plants that are suited for your garden conditions.

Money Saving Tips:

If you have a lot of space fill, buy fast spreading species such as lambs ears, ajuga, bee balm and lily-of-the valley. They grow quickly giving a carpet of color cheap.

5. Planting Secrets

There is an adage among gardeners. Dig a \$10 hole for a \$5 tree. In other words, get your new treasure off to a great start by planting them right. Dig a hole twice as wide but no deeper.

Time Saving Tip:

Fill your planting holes with soil you dug from them. Resist the temptation to fill the holes with rich amended soil, otherwise roots will not grow outside of the holes.

6. Get Rid of Weeds

Keep your garden beautiful by stopping weeds. A 2 to 3 inch deep layer of mulch keeps weeds at bay, helps maintain moisture during dry periods, and if you use straw, shredded bark, peanut hulls, etc. it slowly breaks down and improves your soil.

Effort Saving Tips:

Be sure that you pull weeds when they are young before they have a chance to mature and spread seeds around the garden. They are easier to pull from the ground too.

7. Time Saving Tip:

Take a couple of minutes every day to look at your garden. If you notice and treat issues such as aphids, Japanese beetles or black spot early, you can usually prevent them from becoming major problems.

One last tip, find a friend or neighbor to exchange plants with. I had a neighbor walking by admiring my gardens and before she left she invited me to come to her house to gather some of hers!

Let's not forget that plants aren't the only gardening activity. Great joy can come in small packages- container gardening adds great color and texture to any porch, patio or deck. Starting an herb or vegetable garden is a great use of a small backyard space-you can't go wrong growing your own groceries! And let's not forget the birds-there are many plants that will attract the birds to your yard and many things you can have to keep them coming back time and time again.

Got to go now, won't you join me playing in the dirt?

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Ann Taylor

