



Virginia Cooperative Extension - Loudoun County Master Gardeners



Helpline Hints for May – the first spring planting month

Flowers	Garden	Lawn	Trees / Shrubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct sow annuals, biennials, and perennials after mid-May – <u>last chance of frost</u> • Transplant seedlings after hardening • Plant tender summer blooming bulbs (begonias, caladiums, cannas, dahlias, and gladiolas) • Plant containers and hanging baskets • Mix flowers and herbs so pests aren't attracted to one location • Deadhead spent flowers on bulbs – prune foliage AFTER turns yellow • Deadhead lilacs, rhododendrons, and other perennials after blooming • Pinch back asters, coreopsis, perennial sunflowers, sages, mums, and other bushy perennials to promote fullness and self-support • Fertilize annuals and container plants with manure tea, fish emulsion or organic fertilizer every week • Plant tropical water lilies • Remove unwanted volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transplant seedlings after hardening – remember they need warm soil to grow so early planting won't reap early results • Harvest early crops; remove any that bolt or get seed stalks • Protect ripening strawberries from birds; remove blossoms on young plants to encourage stronger ones; allow day-neutral plants to bloom after 6 weeks; fall-planted crops can bloom and fruit • Blanch cauliflower heads when they are 2" in diameter by tying leaves over the head • Pinch back annual herbs and thin if needed • Keep vegetables and fruits well watered; mulch with straw to contain moisture and reduce weeds • Fertilize crops with manure tea (manure in cheese cloth, soaked for several hours, then strained) or slow release organic fertilizer • Look for cucumber beetles / cabbage worms – protect with row covers until they bloom • Wash aphids off plants with a strong stream of water or get natural predators (lady bugs) • Add beneficial insects to garden if needed; provide a shallow dish of water for them and butterflies, and toads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave grass clippings on the lawn to add nitrogen to the soil • Be careful <u>not</u> to nick tree trunks when mowing or trimming so pests and/or diseases can't enter tree; or kill tree by girdling • Control weeds before they go to seed; it's easier to pull them when they're young and the soil is damp • Keep adding to the compost pile; be sure to air by turning or fluffing, and keep it moist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transplant evergreens that need moving and keep them well-watered • Prune early blooming and evergreen hedges, shrubs, and trees; do <u>not</u> prune summer or fall bloomers • Prune any missed dead/diseased wood and water sprouts • Look for tent caterpillars and bagworms • Look for black spot on roses and apply organic fungicides like sulfur or copper-containing soaps; pick up any fallen leaves and do <u>not</u> compost; deadhead for continuous bloom; fertilize every month with 5-10-5 • Prepare for cicadas by covering young fruit trees and dogwoods with netting

Other May activities: Water lawn and garden as needed – 1" per week; move houseplants outside with caution so they don't get sunburned

Visit the Loudoun County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden at Ida Lee Park to see various gardens and new planting techniques . . . or contact our Helpline to get recommendations for pest control: 703 771-5150 or ex107@vt.edu.