

In the Late Spring Garden

MAY AND JUNE will keep you very busy in the garden. Do what you can, and spend lots of time sitting back to enjoy.

Clean Up, Watering & General Chores

- Set up soaker hoses or drip watering systems. Monitor the moisture in your soil and be sure to water when necessary, especially any new additions. Try not to splash the leaves and water early enough so leaves are dry by nightfall
- Deadhead spent bulb flowers; let foliage grow and ripen.
- Pull weeds when they're small and soil is moist (not too wet or too dry).
- Remove or relocate unwanted perennial seedlings. Remove and discard invasive plant seedlings, and keep on top of invasive control. Go to cipwg.uconn.edu for comprehensive information.
- Pinch/cut back summer-flowering perennials for height control. Thin out a third of the stems of plants prone to powdery mildew (e.g., garden phlox and bee balm). Pinch/cut back autumn-flowering plants (hardy mums, tall asters, Montauk daisy) by half in May for height control, and once again in early June.
- Deadhead, cut back or shear spring-flowering perennials when flowers fade.
- Hoop your peonies and stake plants that will need support while still under a foot tall. Get structures in place.
- Promptly remove diseased leaves, bag and discard. Wash your hands and disinfect tools before continuing. Keep some disinfectant wipes handy.
- Try to have enough space between plants to ensure good air circulation.

Plant, Transplant, Divide

- Plant dahlias and tuberous begonias after the last frost date. Plant gladiolus from mid-May to the end of June.
- Transplant/divide summer- and fall-blooming perennials. If a perennial is losing vigor, doesn't bloom as well, or

is dying out in the center, it probably needs division.

- Divide spring-bloomers after they flower.
- Finish all planting by mid-June so that roots get established before hot weather arrives. In late June be sure to provide shade and water to new transplants. You can also try an anti-transpirant such as Wilt-Pruf.*
- Dig a hole larger than the root ball. For shrubs and trees, the root ball should rest on firm earth. Backfill with soil from the hole.

Be careful not to plant too deep, especially trees, and always be sure the root flare is not covered.

- Don't make the soil too rich or the roots may be less inclined to spread out and search for nutrients.

- Soak the root ball in water first, and rough up the roots before planting.

- If you leave plants in peat pots, bury the pot rim or it'll wick water away from the roots. Keep new plants in a shady place for a few days, watching water needs, and gradually introduce them to more sunlight.
- Direct sow tender annuals.
- Don't plant tomatoes until the soil warms up (see edibles section).

Containers

- If you use packaged potting soil, add some good garden soil or compost: about one-third topsoil or compost to two-thirds potting soil. This makes it easier to wet and provides some nutrients.
- Put a piece of window screen or similar material in the bottom of the container for drainage. Most plants need every bit of space for their roots.
- Many like to add some slow-release granular fertilizer to potting soil. Mix in one or two handfuls, depending on the size of the pot.

Pests & Diseases

- Think you need a pesticide? Verify that pests are the root of your problem.
- Allow some pests in your yard. Many

insects are beneficial and help get rid of the bad guys. If a particular plant is consistently plagued by pests, replace it with a pest-resistant plant or move the plant to a better location. A diversified garden with a variety of plants will ensure the protection of the rest of your plot should pests attack.

Soil Amendments, Mulch, Fertilizers & Good Earth

- When the soil warms up, weed and apply mulch. Lay down 1-3 inches, keeping it away from plant, shrub and tree stems/trunks to avoid rot that lets in pathogens. Leave some bare spots on your property as bee nesting sites, and muddy spots for butterflies.
- How's your soil? Don't guess, test. Go to UConn's website at www.soiltest.uconn.edu or to The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's website at portal.ct.gov/CAES to learn how.
- Pay attention to soil pH levels – if a plant is not doing well it may be the pH is too high or too low, keeping nutrients from being absorbed. UConn and The Ag Station can make recommendations on soil fertility and pH.

Roses

- Most roses are heavy feeders. They need supplemental fertilizer and plenty of water. Apply one cup of balanced organic fertilizer per large bush in both May and June. Lightly scratch it into the soil to keep it from being washed away by rain, and be sure to water before and after fertilizing.
- Scratch in a heaping teaspoon of Epsom Salts around each plant in May and June to promote basal shoots. Some gardeners push pieces of banana peel into the soil around each rose to provide a potassium boost.
- Black spot is a fact of life for rose gardeners, and may be reduced by removing infected leaves as they appear.
- Water early enough in the day so the leaves are dry by nightfall.

May Chores: Edibles

- Finish pruning fruit trees, grapevines, blueberries, and raspberries. All should be breaking dormancy and/or flowering, which means it's time for fertilizer.
- Plant new asparagus crowns with generous amounts of compost. Keep asparagus beds picked if they're three years old or more.
- Harvest rhubarb when stems are

