

APRIL GARDENING TIPS

Now is the time to plant summer flowering bulbs (dahlias, gladiolas, lilies). Consider adding a spoonful of bulb boost for each bulb.

When the blooms are done, deadhead daffodils, tulips and hyacinths but leave the greens until they turn brown.



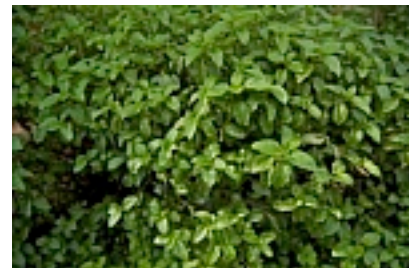
We're coming into the season of planting which can easily dig a large hole in the pocketbook. Try dividing your summer blooming perennials and moving the new plants into bare spots. What about having a plant swap with friends and neighbors?

Weed your beds. This should be done before the weeds can get a foothold in the gardens. They can harbor unwanted insects and diseases. You want to get rid of them as soon as possible - before they go to seed.

Add organic matter to your beds before planting.

While working in your gardens, try to avoid walking on the wet soil. This compacts the soils and makes it more difficult for new growth to find its way to the surface.

This is a great time to plant ornamental grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. With all the rain/snow we've had this year, the ground is saturated and I'm sure many of us are experiencing standing water in our yards - the perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Rather than using commercial insect repellent try growing and using some very familiar herbs that mosquitoes don't seem to like - catnip, marigold, rosemary, lemongrass, wormwood, mint.



Keep the crushed leaves in small containers at intervals on your patio/deck. Except for marigold and wormwood (which can cause contact dermatitis) you can also rub the crushed leaves on your skin.

I once again recommend the May issue of The Herb Companion. There is a wonderful article about Xeriscape - derived from the Greek word xeros, which means "dry" and describes a method of low-watering landscaping. Also, an article about echinaceas - offering names of many new varieties that have unusual flower colors and forms.



Though I cut way back on the number of seeds I've started this year, my moonvine and hyacinth bean vine seeds have sprouted and are doing very well. About 99% success in germination. After all the trouble and expense of starting black-eyed Susan vines from seeds, I later found them coming up profusely in my gardens so decided not to start them in the house. Hopefully, I'll have as many popping through the soil this year and can transplant them into pots. If all goes well, I should be able to share all at the May/June meetings.