

MAY GARDENING TIPS

We're probably all pretty much at a stand-still in our gardening due to all the rain. The lawns and trees/bushes have been dancing for joy with the cooler, wet conditions, but the annuals are not happy. They need SUN, so I hope you haven't been too anxious and already planted some of your annual herbs - especially the basil. They just won't survive in these conditions. Most of my new herbs and all the seedlings I nurtured in the house are now living mostly in the garage to prevent them from rotting - only going outside during the brief moments when the sun has shone its face. They aren't happy or growing much, but at this point I'm just trying to keep them alive. I'll be bringing some of my babies to the next meeting to share with everyone. (moonvine, hyacinth bean vine, Mexican sunflowers, black-eyed Susan vine, and perhaps some purple basil, and Genovese basil)

If you are starting your summer planters remember to choose plants that have the same growing and care requirements water and light.

Taking your indoor plants outside for the summer? Harden them off by having them outside for only a short time each day to begin with, and then increase the time gradually. Definitely get them outside before you turn on your air conditioning.

Did you know you can actually control/change the color of your hydrangea blooms? Add lime for pink flowers and aluminum sulfate for blue. It's all in the pH level of the soil.

Moss in your lawn or gardens? Again, pH is a factor as well as excessive moisture and shade. Adding lime will help with the pH level.

Mulch and compost are both great soil conditioners. Nutrient-rich compost leeches into the soil and feeds countless microorganisms, earthworms and fungi. If making your own compost or using manure-rich compost, make sure you allow it to mature before using or you can burn your plants. Compost is usually applied as a soil amendment in the late fall or early spring - 1 to 2" layer. Wood stove ashes contain potassium and sweetens acidic soil, while coffee grounds perk up acid-loving plants such as blueberries, azaleas and rhodies. Mulch is a protective cover that also works its way into the soil. It helps control weeds, conserves moisture, eliminates erosion, and aerates packed soil. Before adding new mulch fluff the existing layer to remove the hard crust that may have formed over the winter 1 ½ - 2" layer. Don't pile mulch directly against tree trunks or shrubs.

Mushroom compost is a relatively new product being used by landscapers/gardeners with very good results. Made from agricultural materials, steam treated to eliminate any pests, makes a superior fertilizer product and soil amendment. It's available in bulk at Yard Works, but I'm not sure if available in bags.