



May Gardening Tips RCW Nurseries, Inc.

Annual Color

- ✓ Clean out the cool-season annual beds and replant with warm-season plants.
- ✓ Try Torenia instead of Impatiens and Begonias. Originating from Vietnam, this wonderful annual loves our heat and humidity. It blooms throughout summer and autumn and makes a good companion for Hostas and ferns.
- ✓ Remove flowers from Caladiums, Coleus, and Copper Plant to increase colorful leaf production, and prevent the plants from becoming woody.
- ✓ Attract hummingbirds by planting Lady In Red and/or Nymph Coral Salvia. Deadhead spent blooms, and pinch growing tips to encourage more flowers.
- ✓ If you have very hot and dry areas try Crystal Bowl Zinnia, Dahlberg Daisy, Moss Rose, Ornamental Okra, or Purslane.
- ✓ Vinca (a.k.a. Periwinkles) that are planted in alkaline soil are usually affected by Phytophthora fungus. The best way to enjoy Vinca is to make sure your soil is slightly acidic, use the disease-resistant Pacifica group, and to plant them no earlier than this month.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your annuals, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.
- ✓ Feed annuals with Osmocote or Color Star. These slow release fertilizers will continuously feed plants so you won't have to during the hottest days.

Exotics and Tropicals

- ✓ Move potted orchids and bromeliads outside.
- ✓ Plumerias can be planted outdoors in full sun.
- ✓ Fertilize your tropical plants: Hibiscus, Plumeria, Mandevilla and Allamanda.
- ✓ Watch hibiscus for yellowing spots on leaves. This could be a sign of Spider Mites. To control them, wash with a strong spray of water the leaf tops and undersides every morning for a week. Or spray weekly with either Insecticidal Soap or Neem Oil until they're eliminated.
- ✓ Pinch tips of poinsettias for lush growth.

Fruit Trees

- ✓ Entomosporium leaf spot may cause fruit trees to defoliate prematurely. Apply Mancozeb (maneb) fungicide in spring/early summer after periods of high rainfall to keep the foliage healthy into fall.
- ✓ Plum Curculio insects are active on peaches. Look for fruit that has a resin-like exudate and remove it. Fruit sprays containing Neem Oil or Malathion may also be used for control. Always follow label directions.
- ✓ If Brown Rot Fungus shows up on peaches and plums, use Daconil, Captan or a sulfur fungicide to control the disease. You can alternate products. Always follow label directions.
- ✓ If Pears are exhibiting Fireblight infestation, prune out the damaged limbs about 12 inches below the blackened portion. After each cut, soak your pruners in a 10% bleach solution for at least 10 seconds to kill the disease causing bacteria. If you have planted a Fireblight-resistant variety, it has the ability to wall off the infection and outgrow the problem.
- ✓ If caterpillars are eating your citrus leaves, don't worry. They're most likely butterfly caterpillars. They won't hurt the citrus. If you're not sure what they are, bring it in to us and we'll identify it for you.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your fruit trees.

Herbs

- ✓ Plant Basil to every four tomato plants. Basils are said to make great tomato companion plants, improving their flavor.
- ✓ Keep flower heads removed from Basil to increase leaf production and prevent it from becoming woody.
- ✓ Plant Painted Daisy in your vegetable garden. Not only are the flowers pretty, they also provide some insect control - being the source of the insecticide Pyrethrin.
- ✓ Try Pineapple Sage in a spot that receives afternoon shade. The leaves smell like pineapples and can be used in tea or lemonade. Its flowers attract hummingbirds.
- ✓ All herbs benefit from a light pruning. If you do not need to use the leaves in cooking, dry them in a very slow oven, or freeze them in ice cube trays.



May Gardening Tips RCW Nurseries, Inc.

- ✓ Butterflies are here! Flowering herbs such as Mexican Mint Marigold, Rue, Mints, Chives, and Mexican Oregano make wonderful nectar plants for the adults. Giant and Black Swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on Parsley and Rue, wonderful host plants for the resulting caterpillars.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your herbs, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.

Insect Control

- ✓ Regularly inspect your plants for early signs of insect problems. This is the easiest and most important part of pest control.
- ✓ Identify insects before spraying! Although they may be climbing on your plants - they can be beneficials hunting for their prey. Eliminate the beneficials and you'll create a much larger insect problem later on. If you can't identify the bug - bring it in to us for identification. Read the information below to learn how to identify common insect problems.
- ✓ Bag Worms/Tent Caterpillars: Worms that spin bag-like nests spun in tree branches. Organic controls include spraying leaves with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), and/or cutting the branch with the bag and burning it. Chemical controls include piercing bag and spraying the contents with Malathion or Eight.

Fire Ants: Click here for information on how to control these pests.

Lacebugs: Tiny bugs that suck sap from the undersides of leaves, leaving brown excrement. Leaves have a mottled appearance from the top. Control organically with Neem Oil (Rose Defense). Control chemically with Eight or Malathion.

Pecan Phylloxera: Usually seen as swollen bumps on the leaves and twigs in late spring. Spray with dormant oil. Do not spray when daytime temperatures are predicted to rise above 85 F.

Scale: Adults are non-moving, small, white, hard bumps found on leaves and stems. If a few are found, they can be manually removed. If there are many, spray with dormant oil. Do not spray when daytime temperatures are predicted to rise above 85 F. You can also treat the plant chemically with systemic insecticide.

Spider mites: Yellowing, bronzed or "speckled" leaves. Organic controls include spraying tops and bottoms of leaves every morning for a week with a strong spray of water, insecticidal soap, or Neem Oil. Chemical control includes Kelthane.

Thrips: Microscopic bugs that suck on rosebuds, resulting in malformed blooms. They generally attack hybrid tea roses.

Whiteflies: Tiny flies with white wings. They billow like powder when an infected plant is shaken. Spray with Neem Oil.

Lawn Care

- ✓ Calibrate your watering system to efficiently water your St. Augustine lawn.
- ✓ If you did not give your lawn a feeding in April, do so in the early part of this month.
- ✓ Compacted lawns should be aerated (with a core aerator). This will allow water to penetrate more deeply and make it easier for the grass to develop a deep root system.
- ✓ If lawn areas are looking thin, mow often to encourage grass to spread to those areas. Do not add more fertilizer to those areas - you'll just be feeding any weeds that develop there, and over fertilizing the thicker areas. Overfertilization is a contributing factor for fungal disease development.
- ✓ When mowing do not remove more than 1/3 the height of grass at a time. Leave grass clippings on the lawn after you mow. These will replenish shade grass roots and replenish the soil.
- ✓ Make sure your sprinklers are working properly, and that the lawn is not being overwatered. Overwatering is a contributing factor for fungal disease development.
- ✓ DO NOT apply pesticide on the lawn to prevent Cinch Bugs. This simply does not work.
- ✓ Dead spots on lawns could be due to either Cinch Bugs, Grubworms, or a fungus like Take-All Patch. Bring in a sample and we'll help determine the cause of the problem. Dig a small square with at least an inch of soil clinging to the roots. Make sure half of the sample contains healthy growth.
- ✓ This is the last month to apply broadleaf weed killers before the weather becomes hot.



May Gardening Tips RCW Nurseries, Inc.

Perennials

- ✓ Let your wildflowers go to seed. They'll produce flowering plants for next season.
- ✓ Feed summer blooming perennials with Osmocote to avoid doing so during the upcoming hot months.
- ✓ Fertilize Bearded and Louisiana Iris after blooming.
- ✓ Feed Daylilies with bonemeal.
- ✓ Gardenias typically will drop older leaves. However, if buds are dropping check for drainage and/or pH problems. Gardenias, like Azaleas, Camellias and Magnolias, require an acidic soil.
- ✓ Pinch growing tips to make perennials bushier. Discontinue when they produce flower buds.
- ✓ This will be your last chance to divide crowded perennials. It will become hot very quickly. Give extras away to friends or school/community gardens.
- ✓ Remove spent flowers on early spring blooming perennials to promote more bloom production.
- ✓ Pinch the tops of groundcovers to make them spread faster. If your Asian Jasmine is looking thin, mow or weed-whack it back. This will force it to thicken.
- ✓ Butterflies are here! Plant host and nectar plants such as Mexican Sunflower, Stokes Aster, Coneflowers, Pentas, Lantana, Passion Vine, and others. All thrive on our heat and humidity.
- ✓ Plant perennials that will attract hummingbirds. These include Bat-Face Cuphea, Turk's Cap, Shrimp Plant, Salvia, Penta, Mexican Firebush, Firecracker Plant, Chinese Hat, and others. They also thrive in our heat and humidity and attract butterflies.
- ✓ If you have a very hot, very dry spot try Verbena and Calliopsis.
- ✓ Plant vines on fences for more color. Good evergreen ones are Confederate Jasmine, Carolina Jessamine, and Five-Leaf Akebia.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your perennial border, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.

Roses

- ✓ Watch for die-back (canes turning brown or black at the cut end); prune to healthy eyes, if needed.
- ✓ Feed established roses with a well-balanced fertilizer. Newly planted roses should have bloomed by now, and require a feeding. Choose from Carl Pool, Easy Gro Premium, Miracle Grow for Roses, and Watch Us Grow. All roses thrive on regular, light feedings.
- ✓ For all roses, apply a handful of Epsom salts around each bush, and water it in. Epsom salts contain the element magnesium which is said to encourage new basal breaks.
- ✓ Prevent Black Spot Fungus occurring on hybrid tea roses by preventatively spraying both the bottom and top sides of leaves, and canes, with Funginex. Alternate with Mancozeb or Daconil.
- ✓ DO NOT preventatively spray roses with insecticide. This simply does not work, and serves only to kill beneficial insects like Ladybugs. Spray only when insect damage is detected, and only with an insecticide formulated for the specific insect pest. If you're not sure what insect is causing damage, bring in your damaged leaves, canes, and/or flowers and we'll be happy to diagnose the offending pest for you.
- ✓ Plant Society Garlic below roses to repel Aphids.
- ✓ Plant Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) to attract both Aphids and their predators Ladybugs. The Aphids are attracted to the Butterfly Weeds sticky sap, keeping them off the roses. The Aphids then attract Ladybugs who'll appreciate the easy meal.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your roses, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.

Shrubs

- ✓ Try Pineapple Guava petals in salads, over ice cream or cake. They're very sweet.
- ✓ Finish pruning Ligustrum, Red Tip Photinia, Eleagnus, Boxwood, Dwarf Yaupon and other evergreen shrubs.
- ✓ This first week is your last chance to prune Azaleas. They're setting flower buds for next season's show.
- ✓ If you see yellow leaves on your azaleas, check to see if there is Lacebug damage. See Insect Control on how to identify them. Feed Azaleas with Azalea/Magnolia/Camellia food. Mulch the roots well.



May Gardening Tips RCW Nurseries, Inc.

- ✓ Give Camellias one final feeding this month. Spray with summer oil to control tea scale. This will smother both the adults, eggs and young scale (runners). Do not spray when daytime temperatures reach above 85 F. Mulch the roots well.
- ✓ Pinch back nonblooming shrub tips to force bushier growth.
- ✓ Oleanders normally don't need any pruning, except for shaping or to remove errant branches.
- ✓ Prune other summer bloomers after the flowers fade.
- ✓ Shrubs that are exhibiting Black Spot Fungus can be sprayed with Daconil. Remove any fallen leaves from underneath the shrub to control the disease more effectively.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your shrubs, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.

Trees

- ✓ As soon as possible finish feeding palms and trees with complete fertilizer.
- ✓ Feed Crape Myrtles for a colorful summer this year.
- ✓ Finish pruning palms.
- ✓ Palms can be planted now.
- ✓ Remove any branches that hang too low over sidewalks and streets. Individuals may be tempted to pull and break them. Vehicles can rip branches off as they drive by. In either case, the tree can be damaged with the resulting ragged stubs, and/or stripped off bark.
- ✓ If pruning an oak tree, seal fresh cuts with pruning paint to prevent Oak Wilt infestation.
- ✓ Magnolias come into bloom this month, but also start shedding their oldest leaves.
- ✓ Water trees thoroughly if an inch of rain has not been received in a week.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your trees.

Vegetables

- ✓ Side dress vegetable plants that were planted earlier this year: tomatoes, beans, bell peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cucumber, kohlrabi, lettuce, spinach, and lettuce.
- ✓ Harvest bell peppers when they reach full size, snap beans when the pods are the diameter of a pencil, and tomatoes any time after they begin to turn pink.
- ✓ Keep the soil around your tomatoes evenly moist. While tomatoes are ripening, wide fluctuations in soil moisture levels can cause blossom end rot and fruit cracking.
- ✓ Cucumbers are prolific producers and need to be harvested daily.
- ✓ Plant cantaloupe, eggplant, okra, squash, sweet potatoes, and watermelon. Don't forget to feed these every few weeks to keep them vigorously growing and productive.
- ✓ Install a soaker hose to effectively water your vegetables, without getting water on the leaves and flowers.

Miscellaneous

- ✓ At a minimum, don't forget to get Mom a pretty plant for Mother's Day.
- ✓ Cruise I-45 South to Galveston Island to see the great show of colors by Oleanders this month.
- ✓ Give the soil an application of seaweed or fish emulsion. This adds a bit of organic matter and will help stimulate beneficial soil organism activity. Apply mulch where needed.
- ✓ Move potted indoor plants outdoors under the shade of trees. Leach the soil of accumulated salts by filling and draining the pot with water several times. Repot plants if needed using just one pot size larger. Or to repot in the same size container root prune the plant by cutting off 1/3 of the sides and bottom of the root ball. Repot using fresh potting mix.
- ✓ If you need to transplant in ground perennials, shrubs or roses choose a cloudy day. First dig the new hole, and water it with root stimulator. Dig up the plant, retaining as much of the soil ball as possible to prevent drying out the roots. Transplant to its new home and water in well with root stimulator. Keep the soil moist, but not soggy, until the plant starts growing well.
- ✓ Keep a water source in the yard for birds.
- ✓ Keep your mail box door firmly closed to prevent fleas, spiders, bees, and wasps, from building nests inside.