

GARDENING IN MAY

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

- **Early blight on tomatoes.** Keep foliage dry. Remove diseased leaves as soon as problems appear. Spray with an appropriate fungicide.
- **Garden pests.** Warmer weather brings pests. Check azaleas for lace bugs. Damaged leaves look stippled or bleached and have small, shiny black specks on the undersides. Aphids will not be a problem unless they occur in very large numbers. Lady beetles, lacewings and parasitic wasps can do a good job of keeping the aphid population under control. Also, a strong spray of water from the garden hose will wash aphids off the leaves. Cabbage worms and loopers will be on cole crops. Use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to control these. For grasshoppers, NoLo Bait is an effective control. Always read the labels and follow directions for any pesticides you may choose, even the organic ones. Also, most insecticides will kill all insects, not just the bad ones. The majority of the insect population are either beneficial or benign. The beneficial ones are working for you free of charge either killing the bad bugs or pollinating. Employing an integrated pest management (IPM) program in your landscape can save money, time and beneficial insects. Go to aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu and search "integrated pest management" for information on applying IPM in your landscape.

PLANT

- **Flowering annuals.** Profusion zinnias, portulaca, marigolds, morning glory, ageratum, and celosia provide continuous color in sunny locations. For shady spots, some favorites are impatiens, coleus, caladiums and begonias. Perennials for the sun include Shasta daisy, dusty miller, salvia, daylily and garden mums. Shade loving perennials include hosta, ferns, ajuga, phlox and columbine. Summer bulbs such as cannas, dahlias and caladiums can be planted in May. Lantana loves the summer heat and sun. Most years it will come back from roots.
- In the vegetable garden, plant **sweet potatoes** if you have sandy soil, **okra** and **southern peas**.
- May is a good time to **start new lawns**. St. Augustine for areas that get partial shade and bermuda for sunny locations. Keep mower blades sharp to reduce stress on grass blades caused by dull blades. Mow regularly before the grass gets too high. Remove only the top third of the grass blades. Mow St. Augustine at a height of between 2-3 inches. Mow bermuda at a height of 1 inch to produce dense, wear tolerant turf.

PRUNE

- **Shade trees.** Remove low branches that interfere with mowers, or cast too much shade. Wait to prune oaks until mid-summer to lessen the danger of spreading oak wilt fungus.
- **Spring blooming shrubs and vines.** Light, selective pruning to guide new growth. Next year's flowers will be produced on shoots that develop this year.
- Copper plants, **fall asters** and **chrysanthemums**. Remove growing tips to keep them compact and full.
- **Santolina, coleus, lamb's ear, dusty miller** and **basil**. Pinch out all flower buds to keep the plants growing. Flowers shut down production of leaves.

FERTILIZE

- **Roses.** Every four to six weeks with small amounts of a balanced fertilizer.
- **Lawns.** Use a high-nitrogen ratio (4-1-2) fertilizer with half of the nitrogen in a slow-release form for sandy soils. Clay soils usually need only nitrogen. Avoid weed and feed products that could harm trees and shrubs.

For horticulture questions call 903-583-7453 or email fanninmastergardeners@gmail.com.

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