

May Gardening By Teresa Gaffner

May is here in the Tri-Cities and soil is warming up along with the weather which means we've got plenty to do in our gardens. There are seedlings to plant, fruit trees to spray and it's potentially warm enough to directly sow seeds into your vegetable and flower beds. Okra, corn, squash, and green beans are good vegetables to start now with this method. If you prefer a flower garden, some of the most successful blooming annuals are alyssum, marigolds, and zinnias.

As exciting as late spring is, remember, we still need to check the weather information on late frosts. The last possible frost in the Tri-Cities is predicted to fall between May 11th and May 20th 2023.

Herb lovers will be glad to know that late April to early May is a perfect time to start an herb garden. Plant the family favorites but try something new this year. Thai basil or Chocolate Mint are still easy to grow and would be a welcome addition in your pantry.

Fruit growers know that these are crucial months for the success of their yield. Spraying and fertilizing schedules are essential. Look into netting if birds and other wildlife get to the ripe fruit every year before you do. Take a look at this fruit tree management timetable from the University of Tennessee for ideas on pest control and scheduling ongoing maintenance.
<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP307-D.pdf>

While there are many fruit and vegetables gardens being established, let's not forget our flowerbeds. Plant now for a riot of color all summer. Zinnias are one of the easiest annuals to grow and they will bloom until fall. They come in a vast variety of plant height, bloom shape and vivid colors.

Consider a potted Mandevilla vine for your front porch. It will spend its summer winding its way up a support and blooming through to fall. Mandevilla's have showy trumpet shaped flowers in red, yellow, pink, and white.

Petunias are a summer staple and have a long blooming period. You can see their pop of color in almost everyone's garden. However, around midsummer they become very leggy so you will want to trim them back to half of their length. This ensures another series of blooms and keeps the plant full and attractive.

The coleus is one of the most colorful plants in any garden. However, the color does not come from their small spiky flowers but instead the leaves which come in a variety of colors, sizes, and shapes. Coleuses are tender tropical plants that can be grown anywhere as an annual.

If you want to try something new, consider the new mini vincas; Soiree Kawaii. They come in all the same colors as standard vincas but in miniature. They also bloom all summer and tend to mound and make great ground cover.

Finally, daisies are prolific long bloomers that require little maintenance. They are perennials and come back every year. Like zinnias, they also come in a variety of colors and sizes. Do your research and check the height on the variety that appeals to you so you can work them into their best place in your garden.

As always, check out the University of Tennessee's Home Garden Calendar at this link:
<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W436.pdf>

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.