



NORTHWOODS YARD & GARDEN

Weekly Column

May 6, 2024

Gardening Calendar Heats Up in May

May has arrived and things are greening up. There are numerous activities to do in the yard and garden.

Planting bare-root nursery stock, such as roses, raspberries, apples, and other trees or shrubs is time sensitive. Plant them promptly after they arrive so ideally, they do not break dormancy before getting into the ground. There is still plenty of time for planting other types of nursery stock, such as containers or balled and burlapped materials.

May is the month for getting vegetable gardens going. Assuming soils are dry enough to work, work in organic material such as compost. Crops that tolerate cool weather can be planted now, including beets, carrots, peas, radishes, and onions. Hold off for warm-loving crops, such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, and cucumbers until late May or early June.

While tempting, use caution in planting annual flowers this early. Wait until later this month as freezing temperatures are still likely. Anything planted outside right now, such as in containers or hanging baskets, needs to be able to be moved inside if frost is predicted.

As blooms of spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia fade away, address pruning needs promptly. Prune spring flowering shrubs right after they bloom to help ensure good production next season as flower buds for spring 2025 will form soon. This applies to lilacs and other shrubs blooming before mid-June.

Now is the time to cut back old foliage left from last season of ornamental grasses and perennial flowers so new growth can flourish. However, as daffodils, tulips, and other spring flowering bulbs fade from bloom allow foliage to remain until it yellows. While green foliage generates stored energy used to produce another good flowering show next spring; removing it too soon is detrimental.

Most lawns are now green and growing, but ideally wait until the second mowing to fertilize. While adding nitrogen fertilizer is beneficial for lawn grasses, be careful not to overdo it. Excess nitrogen creates lots of top growth at the expense of root growth, leading to problems later. Apply about one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. The higher the percentage of nitrogen in the fertilizer, the less you need to apply.

Choose fertilizers containing controlled-release nitrogen. Examples include water insoluble nitrogen, sulfur or polymer coated urea, IBDU, or ureaform. This information is found in the guaranteed analysis section of the package. Organic fertilizers are high in controlled released nitrogen. Carefully apply fertilizer to drop only on lawns, not impervious surfaces that could carry fertilizer off target when it rains.

Interested in learning more about Horticulture in Iron County? Feel free to contact:

Bruce Spangenberg
Horticulture Educator
Extension Iron County
300 Taconite Street, Suite 118
Hurley, WI 54534

Phone: 715-561-2695
Email: bruce.spangenberg@wisc.edu

