As I looked out my window this morning I saw a dusting of snow on the ground and on the trees. It was a pretty sight, but I thought spring was here! The red maple in my back yard is in full bloom and looked so pretty covered with light snow. Daffodils are also in bloom, the grass is getting green and the robins are singing. It’s amazing how we broke a record high a few days ago on March 20 with 77 degrees, and today it was snowing! But, it won’t last long. It’s afternoon now, and the snow has already melted. As a gardener you may be anxious to get out and work in your garden. Garden Centers are starting to get in transplants and cool-season flowers like snapdragons and pansies. These two flowers are good choices for containers if you want early color.

Have you planted your cool-season vegetables yet? Anyone with raised beds should have been able to plant in mid to late March. I planted spinach, lettuce and peas in my raised beds on March 12. If your garden is wet and muddy, you will need to wait until it dries out so you don’t compact the soil when walking on it. Also, seeds in cool, wet soil will take awhile to germinate and could even rot. As soon as your soil is workable, you can set out broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and Brussels Sprout transplants. Also, you can direct seed lettuce, spinach, radishes, and peas. Seed potatoes can also be planted when the soil dries and is workable. Sweet potatoes are a warm-season crop and you should wait until at least mid-May to plant them.

Do not get in a hurry to plant warm-season vegetables like tomatoes and peppers. Some people get in a hurry to plant these crops in April so they can have the first, juicy, ripe tomato of the season. But, late spring freezes or frosts can damage or kill these plants and then you would have to replant them. Usually the second or third week of May is the best time to start planting warm-season vegetables in northeast Missouri.

You may have noticed a lot of crabgrass in your lawn last summer. This probably means you have a lot of seed just waiting to germinate in your yard again. To avoid having crabgrass take over your yard, you need to apply a crabgrass preventer by April 15. Crabgrass is an annual grass, meaning it germinates from seed, grows one season, and then dies with the first hard freeze. Crabgrass preventer kills the seed that is in the ground. It cannot distinguish one kind of seed from another, and will kill all seed. So, do not seed...
(Continued from page 1)

your lawn at this time.

Ornamental grasses and dead foliage from perennials that you left through the winter should be cut to the ground just as the new growth begins. You should also divide and transplant any perennials that are getting too big. By mid-April you will want to cut back your roses, particularly the dead, brown canes that suffered winter damage. When your spring flowers such as tulips and daffodils are finished blooming, wait to cut back their foliage until it turns brown and dies down. This allows the bulb to store up nutrients to put on flowers next season. If you wrapped your trees for winter protection now is the time to start taking those wraps off. You do not want to leave them on during the summer. Moisture and insects can get down inside and cause damage to your tree.

ALL-AMERICA SELECTION WINNERS “ORNAMENTALS”

SOURCE:  http://www.all-americaselections.org/Winners.asp
Go to this site to see color photos of the award winners.

Gaillardia ‘Arizona Apricot’ AAS Flower Award Winner

Gaillardia ‘Arizona Apricot’ offers a new and unique apricot color for this class. Blooms have yellow edges that deepen to a rich apricot in the center. Judges noted the award-winning distinctive flower color of the 3 to 3.5 inch daisy-like flowers, described as exceptionally lovely and lighter in color than traditional gaillardia. Just 105 days after sowing seed, this Gaillardia x grandiflora will bloom from early summer into autumn. The compact 12-inch tall plants offer bright green foliage and a tidy uniform habit best viewed when planted to the front of the flower bed. ‘Arizona Apricot’ is free-flowering, blooming heavily without vernalization, covering the plant with bright blooms that look great in mass. This long-flowering perennial is hardy in USDA Zones 2-10, is relatively maintenance free, and drought-tolerant once established. Gardeners will want to remove old flowers to encourage additional blooming. Bred by Ernst Benary of America Inc.

Ornamental Kale ‘Glamour Red’ F1 AAS Cool Season Bedding Plant Award Winner

This is All-America Selections’ first winning kale (edible or ornamental) in seventy-eight years of trialing! ‘Glamour Red’ is an excellent achievement in breeding for its unique shiny leaves. The waxless quality of the leaves makes them shiny with a more intense, vivid color as compared to existing ornamental brassicas. Judges noted that the shiny foliage is striking in the landscape and it out-performed comparisons with outstanding success. It is a fringed leaf type Brassica oleracea with flower head size of 10 to 12 inches. This full sun annual will bloom 90 days from sowing seed to first color. Leaf coloring begins when night temperatures fall below 55°F for approximately two weeks. Expect good disease tolerance in all regions and frost tolerant blooms from November to March in warmer climates. Bred by Takii & Co., Ltd.

Salvia ‘Summer Jewel Red’ AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

This Salvia coccinea was consistently rated “superior” or “above average” by the AAS judges because of its early and generous flower blossoms, continuing from spring to autumn. Additionally, each dwarf and densely branching plant remains a tidy 20 inches tall, even at full maturity. The bright red flower spikes are covered with half inch blooms making it perfect for the bird lover’s garden where the bright red color acts as a magnet for hummingbirds. As an added bonus, goldfinches swarm the plant for seeds. Even the leaves add beauty with their finer-textured, dark-green color. ‘Summer Jewel Red’, just 50 days from sowing to first flower, is approximately two weeks earlier than comparisons. Expect long season performance and superior holding ability in both wind and rain. This annual is ideal for full sun containers, mixed beds and borders where uniformity is desired. Bred by Takii & Co, Ltd.

Viola ‘Shangri-La Marina’ F1 AAS Cool Season Bedding Plant Award Winner

This winning Viola cornuta is an early-flowering, mounding viola in a vibrant new color for this type. In trials, the 6-inch tall plants kept a low-growing mounding habit. Colorful and prolific 1¼ inch blooms have light blue petals with a velvety dark blue face that is surrounded by a narrow white border. Judges noted earlier (70 days from sowing to first flower) and showier blooms with noticeable drive by flower power. Flower color was a consistent deep Marina blue throughout the season. This vigorous frost-tolerant biennial provides a solid mat of fall color until covered with snow followed by a great recovery in spring. Grow in full sun as a low edging in the garden or in hanging baskets and pots. Bred by Tokita Seed Co., Ltd.
EATING LOCAL...PART 3—EATING YOUR WEEDS

Have you ever eaten the weeds from your garden or tried any wild edibles such as morel mushrooms? Growing up in the Ozarks, I was introduced to eating weeds and wild edibles at a young age by my mom, who learned from my dad’s mom, who learned from her mother, my great-grandma. As a child, we mainly picked pokeweed, lambquarters, mushrooms, purselane, elderberries, black walnuts and wild blackberries. My sisters and I would always question why we were eating weeds. Now as an adult, I love lambquarters and actually can’t wait for it to come up so I can pick it and eat it. I pick lots of it, and I blanch it and freeze it. It makes a great spinach substitute. Even my husband likes it. It also works well as a lettuce substitute. I use it fresh on sandwiches and in tacos in place of lettuce. It was always fun going out in the woods in the spring on our Ozarks farm with my dad looking for mushrooms. He always said mushrooms will be found near Ash trees, so we would walk around in the woods and areas where he knew the ash trees were. We also picked mushrooms in the fall. They were a different kind of mushroom than the morels we picked in the spring. Sometimes mom would cook them up for breakfast, and sometimes we would have them for dinner. When I was a kid, my Grandma June picked lots of wild blackberries and boisenberries and would make cobblers and pies. She would also pick up black walnuts to use in desserts, breads, and cookies. In the fall my mom and sisters and I would pick persimmons and make persimmon cookies. I love persimmon cookies as does my son, who started teaching my oldest son what weeds we can eat these traditions of eating wild edibles. I have already tried them both ways—making sassafras tea and making sassafras tea, but if I remember right, it did not taste all that good. Oh, the life of living on an Ozarks farm! I’m glad my grandma and mom passed down this tradition of eating wild edibles. I have already started teaching my oldest son what weeds we can eat and what wild fruits we can pick out in the woods. He thinks it is fun to go with mom and pick wild fruit, weeds, and of course the produce from our garden.

Did you know you can eat cattails? I ate cattails for the first time two years ago when a Master Gardener brought them to a meeting. They are not bad and I would eat them again. Other common wild edibles include dandelion, chickweed, purselane, elderberry, among many others. Before picking a wild plant to eat, make sure you have correctly identified the plant. Poison hemlock has killed people who mistook it for its relatives, wild carrots and wild parsnips.

When picking wild edibles for food, there are some things to consider. Plants growing near homes and occupied buildings or along roadsides may have been sprayed with pesticides. Wash them thoroughly. Avoid roadside plants, if possible, due to contamination from exhaust emissions. Do not pick plants growing in contaminated water.

Some plants develop extremely dangerous fungal toxins. To lessen the chance of accidental poisoning, do not eat any fruit that is starting to spoil or showing signs of mildew or fungus. Plants of the same species may differ in their toxic or subtoxic compounds content because of genetic or environmental factors. One example of this is the foliage of the common chokecherry. Some chokecherry plants have high concentrations of deadly cyanide compounds while others have low concentrations or none. Horses have died from eating wilted wild cherry leaves. Avoid any weed, leaves, or seeds with an almond-like scent, a characteristic of the cyanide compounds.

Some people are more susceptible to gastric distress from plants than others. If you are sensitive in this way, avoid unknown wild plants. If you are extremely sensitive to poison ivy, avoid products from this family, including any parts from sumacs, mangoes, and cashews. Some edible wild plants, such as acorns and water lily rhizomes, are bitter. These bitter substances, usually tannin compounds, make them unpalatable. Boiling them in several changes of water will usually remove these bitter properties.

Many valuable wild plants have high concentrations of oxalate compounds, also known as oxalic acid. Oxalates produce a sharp burning sensation in your mouth and throat and damage the kidneys. Baking, roasting, or drying usually destroys these oxalate crystals. The corm (bulb) of the jack-in-the-pulpit is known as the "Indian turnip," but you can eat it only after removing these crystals by slow baking or by drying. To avoid potentially poisonous plants, stay away from any wild or unknown plants that have: milky or discolored sap; beans, bulbs, or seeds inside pods, bitter or soapy taste; spines, fine hairs, or thorns; dill, carrot, parsnip, or parsleylike foliage; "Almond" scent in woody parts and leaves; grain heads with pink, purplish, or black spurs; three-leaved growth pattern.

The Missouri Department of Conservation has good book on “Wild Edibles of Missouri”. This book has pictures and descriptions of wild edible plants and list the uses of the plant. Recipes for some plants are also included. I hope you will try some wild edibles this spring if you have not done so in the past. Try lambquarters, if you like cooked spinach, you will like it. Remember, never eat a plant that you cannot correctly identify. If you are in question about the identification of a plant, ask for help identifying it, or do not eat it.

If you missed “Eating Local Part 1 & 2” in the February and March issues, you can read those articles at this link http://extension.missouri.edu/adair.
GARDEN TIPS FOR APRIL

VEGETABLES
- Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash, and watermelon seeds indoors in peat pots.
- Finish sowing seeds of all cool-season vegetables not yet planted outdoors.
- Flower stalks should be removed from rhubarb plants if they develop.

ORNAMENTALS

WEEKS 1-3:
- Winter mulches should be removed from roses. Fertilize established roses once new growth is 2 inches long. Begin spraying for black spot disease.
- Shrubs and trees best planted or transplanted in the spring are butterfly bush, dogwood, Rose-of-Sharon, Black Gum, redbud, grapes, magnolia, tulip poplar, birch, gingko, hawthorn, and most oaks.

WEEK 4:
- Easter lilies past blooming can be planted outdoors. Set the bulbs 2-3 inches deeper than they grew in the pot.
- Apply controls for holly leaf minor when new leaves are just beginning to grow.
- Evergreen and deciduous hedges may be sheared. Prune the top narrower than the base so sunlight will reach the lower limbs.
- Prune spring flowering ornamentals after they finish blooming.

FRUIT-ALL MONTH
- Blemish-free fruits unmarred by insect or disease injury can rarely be produced without relying on regular applications of insecticides and fungicides. For specific information, see MU guide G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule.
- Plant bare-root or potted fruit trees as soon as the soil can be worked.
- Remove tree wraps from trees now.
- Prune peaches and nectarines now.
- Leaf rollers are active on apple trees. Control as needed.
- Stink bugs and tarnished plant bugs become active on peaches.
- Destroy and prune off webs of eastern tent caterpillar.
- Protect bees and other pollinating insects. Do not spray insecticides on fruit trees that are blooming.
- Begin sprays for fireblight susceptible apples and pears using an agricultural streptomycin.
- Spider mites and codling moths become active on apples.

LAWN & TURF
- Start mowing cool season grasses at recommended heights. Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or if soil is compacted. Topdress low spots and finish overseeding thin or bare patches.
- Apply crabgrass preventers before April 15. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.

MISCELLANEOUS:
- Termites begin swarming. Termites can be distinguished from ants by their thick waists and straight antennae. Ants have slender waists and elbowed antennae.
- Honeybees are swarming. Wasp and hornet queens begin nesting.
- Hummingbirds return from their winter home in Central America.

- MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-