SPRING PLANTING IN THE GARDEN

It’s been a long, snowy winter in Northeast Missouri. Nothing like the mild winter and warm March we had in 2012. Actually, this year is what a winter should be like. Having consistent cold temperatures is much better for our plants than wide fluctuations like we had last year. Last spring I planted broccoli on March 15. As I write this, Easter is on Sunday, it is almost April, there is snow on the ground, and it has been so cold the broccoli transplants are still sitting in my house waiting to be planted. I was able to plant lettuce and spinach seed earlier in the month. It will germinate when the temperatures warm. Most gardeners I talk to are definitely ready for spring weather and anxious to get in the garden and plant cool-season crops. As soon as the ground is workable and daytime temperatures warm, and nighttime temperatures stay above freezing, you can plant. Some cool-season crops like broccoli can tolerate temperatures in the high 20s, but be prepared to cover your plants if night time lows dip below that.

Vegetables: Cool-season crops recommended for planting now include spinach, lettuce, sugar snap peas, Swiss chard, beets, carrots, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale and some other not so common crops. Do not wait until May to plant these, especially broccoli. Every year some people plant broccoli in mid to late May and then wonder why it does not form a head. I harvest broccoli heads in May, water the plants throughout the summer, and harvest side shoots when it cools off in the fall. Some years, broccoli can be harvested until November. Usually by the end of May or early June a lot of these cool-season crops are finished producing. Some crops like lettuce, spinach and radishes will bolt, or produce a flower head when the weather gets hot. Some, like lettuce, will turn bitter. I like to make a fall planting of these crops again in August. I do succession planting in my raised beds. I’ll plant my spring crops, harvest them, pull them out and throw them in the compost pile, then plant warm-season crops in their place like tomatoes, green beans, zucchini, etc. In the fall I’ll interplant rows of lettuce, spinach and/or radishes.

Fruit: Spring is a good time to plant fruit trees and small fruit plants like strawberries, grapevines, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries and others. If you are new to gardening be sure you do your research on these plants to learn their culture requirements. Some fruit plants require winter protection by wrapping the trunk to protect them from hungry critters and the cold. Most fruit plants require yearly pruning and fertilization. Some fruits require sprays to keep away insects and diseases. Fruit plants take up space, so if you don’t have space, consider purchasing fruit from a local grower or at the farmers’ market in your area. University of Missouri Extension has guides on

"A small green frog
On a big brown log;
A black and yellow bee
In a little green tree;
A red and yellow snake
By a blue-green lake,
All sat and listened
To red bird sing,
"Wake up, everybody,
It’s spring! It’s spring!"

(Continued on page 2)
commonly grown fruit crops in Missouri. Contact your county extension center or email me at schutterjl@missouri.edu and I will send you the guide on the fruit crop you are interested in. You can also download guides at extension.missouri.edu.

**Lawn:** Surely, it won’t be too much longer until we’ll be starting our lawn mowers and smelling fresh cut grass. Mow high, 3-3.5 inches is the recommended mowing height. This helps shade out weeds and keeps moisture from evaporating so fast. Small areas of the lawn can be reseeded in the spring with good results, but large areas are best reseeded in the fall. If you have had crabgrass in the past, then you should apply crabgrass preventer by April 15. Although, this year with March being so cold and snowy, you may be able to get by with applying it just a little later into April. If you have a lot of dandelions in your yard this spring, that may be an indication that your pH is not in the ideal range. Typically lawns that have a lot of weeds have an acidic soil pH. You can test the soil to find out how much lime and nutrients/fertilizer you need to apply to correct your soil. I do not like spraying weeds with chemicals. I know some of you do it, but I choose not to. I use a weed digger and dig out the few dandelions I have in my yard. People driving down my street probably wonder what I am doing or why I dig them out, but oh well. I actually hope they are curious enough to stop and ask so I can visit with them about lawn care. I also use straight vinegar as an organic spray control. With the drought last year, some homeowners may see an increase in dandelions and other weeds, especially if they did not seed the dead areas of their lawn last fall. Ground Ivy or Creeping Charlie, is another weed that can take over a lawn if not controlled. I also hand pull this one and keep at it all summer, and just tolerate it in some locations of the yard where it has just gotten out of hand. Chemical products containing Triclopyr, are recommended for control.

**Flowers:** Cool-season flowers like pansies and snapdragons are a good choice for early plantings in containers or beds and borders. As the weather gets warmer, particularly into May, warm-season flowers like marigolds, petunias, geraniums and many others can be planted outdoors.

**Wild Edibles:** As you are working in your garden, landscape, or out and about on your farm, remember all of the wild edibles that are available in the spring such as dandelion greens, chickweed, lambsquarter, pokeweed, wild onion, shepherd’s purse, chicory, redbud, ox-eye daisy, dock, cattails, violets, henbit, broadleaf plantain among many others. Be sure you are 100% sure of the identification of the weed before you eat it. If you are not sure what something is, it is best to not pick and eat it. Most of these wild edibles listed above are best eaten when young and tender. Some develop toxins or substances in them as they mature that can make you sick if you eat too much.

Happy spring to all!

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**FARMERS’ MARKET WORKSHOP TO BE HELD APRIL 22 IN KIRKSVILLE**

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services will conduct a workshop for producers of foods sold at farmer’s markets. The focus will be on the regulations and exemptions, approved source, food safety and sanitation, and processing of non-exempt foods. The workshop is April 22 from 12:30-4:00 p.m. at the Missouri Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office, 3500 S. Baltimore, Kirksville. The workshop is for farmers’ market producers and vendors or anyone interested in selling at a farmers’ market. There is no cost to attend. Questions, call 573-751-6095 or email ellen.dettman@health.mo.gov.

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**SPRING INTO GARDENING WORKSHOP**

Spring is just around the corner and you know what that means...garden time! Learn how to get your garden started and care for it all summer. Topics to be covered include: site selection, soil preparation, plant selection, raised beds, caring for your vegetable crops, harvesting and much more.

The workshop will be held at the Putnam County High School Library on Wednesday, April 10th from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. Jennifer Schutter, horticulture specialist with University of Missouri Extension, will present the workshop. Register for the class by April 8th. Contact Natalie Hunt at Putnam County Memorial Hospital 660-947-2411 x2226 or email nhunt@pcmhosp.com.

Funded in-part by the Missouri Foundation for Health SIM grant. A collaboration between the Putnam County Memorial Hospital and Putnam County Health Department.
2013 PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR

The Perennial Plant of the Year™ (POY™) program began in 1990 to showcase a perennial that is a standout among its competitors. Perennials chosen are suitable for a wide range of growing climates, require low maintenance, have multiple-season interest, and are relatively pest/disease-free.

*Polygonatum odoratum ‘Variegatum’* is the Perennial Plant Association’s 2013 Perennial Plant of the Year™. *Polygonatum odoratum*, pronounced *po-lig-o-nay’tum o-do-ray’tum vair-e-ah-gay’tum*, carries the common names of variegated Solomon’s Seal, striped Solomon’s Seal, fragrant Solomon’s Seal and variegated fragrant Solomon’s Seal. This all-season perennial has greenish-white flowers in late spring and variegated foliage throughout the growing season. The foliage turns yellow in the fall and grows well in moist soil in partial to full shade.

The genus *Polygonatum*, native to Europe, Asia, and North America is a member of the Asparagaceae family. It was formerly found in the family Liliaceae. Regardless of its new location, members of *Polygonatum* are excellent perennials for the landscape. The genus botanical name (*Polygonatum*) comes from poly (many) and gonu (knee joints) and refers to the many-jointed rhizome from which the leaves arise. The common name Solomon’s Seal has several proposed derivations. The first is that the scar that remains on the rootstock after the leaf stalks die off in the fall resembles the seal impressed on wax on documents in the past. The second source is that John Gerard, the English botanist and herbalist, suggested that the powdered roots were an excellent remedy for broken bones. He also felt that the plant had the capacity for “sealing wounds,” which was why the perennial received the common name – Solomon’s Seal.

*Polygonatum odoratum ‘Variegatum’* grows 18 to 24 inches tall and will spread by rhizomes to form colonies. The oval-shaped leaves are carried on upright, arching, unbranched stems. The variegated leaves are light green with white tips and margins. Leaves turn an attractive yellow in the autumn. Sweetly fragrant, small, bell-shaped white flowers with green tips, are borne on short pedicels from the leaf axils underneath the arching stems. Bluish-black berries are sometimes present in the autumn. Variegated Solomon’s Seal is a classic beauty for the shady woodland garden or the part-shade to full-shade border. It is a great companion plant to other shade lovers including hostas, ferns, and astilbes. The sweet fragrance will enhance that walk along a pathway on a spring morning. Flower arrangers will find the variegated foliage to be an attribute for spring floral arrangements. And finally, this all-season perennial offers yellow fall foliage color.

There are no serious insect or disease problems with variegated Solomon’s Seal. Plants may be divided in the spring or fall. The white rhizomes should be planted just below the soil surface. *Polygonatum odoratum ‘Variegatum’* is a very easy perennial to grow and will enhance any shade garden, especially a more natural one.

**Light:** Variegated Solomon’s seal performs well in part to full shade conditions.

**Soil:** Variegated Solomon’s seal prefers moist, well-drained soil.

**Uses:** This perennial offers vivid highlights in shaded areas of borders, woodland gardens, or naturalized areas. The variegated foliage is attractive in flower arrangements.

**Unique Qualities:** Solomon’s Seal has arching stems that carry pairs of small, bell-shaped, white flowers in mid to late spring. The variegated ovate leaves are soft green with white tips and margins. Fall leaf color is yellow.

**Maintenance:** There are no serious insect or disease problems with variegated Solomon’s seal. Plants may be divided in the spring or fall. The white rhizomes should be planted just below the soil surface. *Polygonatum odoratum ‘Variegatum’* is a very easy perennial to grow and will enhance any shade area.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zones 3 to 8.

Photos by Steven Still/Perennial Plant Association.

**Source:** http://www.perennialplant.org/education/plant-of-the-year
GARDEN TIPS FOR APRIL

VEGETABLES:
- Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash, and watermelon seeds indoors in peat pots. Finish sowing seeds of 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.
- Shrubs and trees best planted or transplanted in the spring include butterfly bush, dogwood, Rose-of-Sharon, Black Gum, tulip poplar, redbud, grapes, magnolia, birch, gingko, hawthorn, and most oaks.
- Fertilize established roses once new growth is 2 inches long. Begin spraying for black spot disease.

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 the 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.

FRUIT-ALL MONTH:
- Blemish-free fruits that are unmarrred by insect or disease injury can rarely be produced without relying on regular applications of insecticides and fungicides. For specific information, see MU guidesheet G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule.
- Plant bare-root or potted fruit trees as soon as 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 over-seeding 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.
- Mole young are born in chambers deep underground.
- Honeybees are swarming.

-MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 10: Gardening program, Putnam County High School Library, Unionville, 6:30-8 pm. No cost to attend.
April 22: Farmers’ Market Workshop, 12:30-4 pm, MO Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office, Kirksville. No cost to attend. For info call 573-751-6095 or email ellen.dettman@health.mo.gov
May 2: Magic City Master Gardener plant sale and rain garden tour, 4-7 pm, Moberly
May 4: Magic City Master Gardener plant sale and rain garden tour, Moberly, MO. 9-12 am.
May 4: Salt River Master Gardener’s Plant Sale, at the Y Men’s Pavilion in Hannibal.
May 17: Adair County Lady Landowner Workshop, Kirksville. RSVP to Adair County SWCD at 660-665-3274.
May: Garden n’ Grow starts at the end of the month. Call 660-665-9866 to register.
July 15-20: NEMO Fair, Kirksville, MO.
September 20-22, 2013: Missouri State Master Gardener Conference, Springfield, MO.
December 6 & 7: Missouri Livestock Symposium, Kirksville.