SPRINGTIME IN THE GARDEN

There is a lot going on in the garden during the month of May. Cool-season crops like spinach, lettuce, kale and broccoli are ready for harvest. To extend the harvest of broccoli, do not remove the plant from the garden after harvesting the center head. Side shoots will develop all summer if the plant is left in the ground. The cooler days of fall stimulate a lot of side shoot growth. Asparagus and rhubarb are perennial crops harvested throughout May. Snap asparagus off at ground level. When the spears become thin, stop harvesting and allow them to produce ferns. Ferns must develop and remain on the plant until they turn completely brown in order to build up enough energy reserves in the roots for next year's crop. Leave ferns on the plant throughout the winter and cut back to ground level in late winter. Harvest rhubarb when stalks are 12-18 inches long. Stop harvesting when stalks get short and thin. If flower stalks form on the plants, cut them off at the base. They sap energy that should go into growing next year's stalks. There are green varieties of rhubarb, so stalks that grow to harvestable size but don't turn red, could be a green variety.

Strawberries ripen in late May and should be harvested in the morning while it is still relatively cool. Place harvested berries in a refrigerator and wait until just before use to rinse in cool water. Botrytis blight, also known as gray mold, is a problem of strawberries during years with prolong rainy and cloudy periods during bloom or harvest. It is most severe in areas of the planting where humidity is high and air circulation is poor. Strawberry fruits turn brown and mushy. Cull out all diseased berries but do not leave them in the bed. Holes in strawberries are often caused from slugs, birds or voles. Deformed berries called nubbins, are caused by insufficient pollination caused by frost damage to the flowers or lack of bee activity because of cool, windy or wet weather at the time pollination should be taking place.

All three of these perennial crops, asparagus, rhubarb and strawberries, like soils high in organic matter. Blend in plenty of decomposed manure or compost. All can be frozen for later use, although asparagus must be blanched first, and when ready to use, do not thaw before cooking.

By mid-May fruit trees are finished blooming and it is safe to follow a spray schedule if you choose to do so. Organic gardeners are often more willing to tolerate insect damage and disease for the benefit of pesticide-free produce. Peach Leaf Curl is a fruit disease often making an appearance in late spring after a period of rainy weather. Leaves may turn red, curl or pucker. There is no control for it at this time. This fungal disease must be treated during the dormant season. A product containing ‘Chlorothalonil’ can be used for control. Fireblight is common on apple and pear trees in a rainy spring. Cedar-apple rust is common on apple and crabapple trees if rainfall has been plentiful. Black rot in grapes starts early in the season, so if you have grapevines, monitor them closely for brown

(Continued on page 2)
spots, and treat with a fungicide containing the active ingredient 'myclobutanil' found at most garden centers. Products containing 'myclobutanil' can be used on most fruit trees, grapevines and even roses. It is a good multi-purpose fungicide.

By May 10, start planting warm-season flowers and vegetables. A late spring frost or freeze can happen, so always be prepared to cover plants. Many vegetables can be grown in raised beds and containers. For home gardeners, eggplant is best planted in a container and kept away from the garden to avoid flea beetles. When planting the garden include companion plants such as basil next to tomatoes and marigolds and nasturtiums around squash plants for insect control. Three marigolds around each squash plant will help control squash bugs and cucumber beetles.

Flowers give a splash of color throughout landscapes. Last year I grew ‘sunpatiens’, a relatively new hybrid. They are marketed as robust, sun loving, heat loving impatiens that thrive in full sun or part shade and deliver continuous color from spring through frost. I planted some in full sun and some in part shade. The plants in full sun did not do very well, and the ones in part shade were beautiful. So, even though they are marketed as sun-loving, I think they need to be planted in part shade for best results. ‘Sunpatiens’ can be used in baskets, window boxes, patio pots or in the landscape. Lantana continues to be one of my all-time favorite annuals to grow. It produces a large plant by summers’ end and is covered in yellow, orange or pink flowers that last until the first frost. It is showy in landscapes and easy to care for.

Anthracnose is a fungal disease often seen on shade trees in late spring. It affects a number of different species including maple, ash, oak and dogwood. It’s caused when moist weather conditions are prevalent. It is characterized by brown spots or blotches along the veins, midribs and margins of the leaves. Fungicides are usually not necessary. Use proper fertilization, watering, pruning and pest control practices to encourage vigorous plant growth on trees.

If growing mushrooms on logs, keep them moist and covered so they do not dry out during the summer. Mushrooms will put on a flush in the spring and often again in the fall if kept moist and out of sunlight.

Keep beds weed-free if possible. Weeds attract insects, so keeping weeds under control will help with bug problems. Keep the borders of gardens mowed. Use PREEN in flower beds, and in asparagus and strawberry beds after harvest. PREEN is good for controlling annual weeds that germinate by seed such as foxtail that is a common problem in iris, strawberry and asparagus beds. PREEN is a pre-emergent herbicide that kills seed in the soil. It keeps the weed seed from germinating. It will not kill existing weeds in the beds. Existing weeds are best hand-pulled, as most herbicides will kill or damage desirable plants. PREEN comes in an organic formulation for use in vegetable gardens or around any edible crops. Mulching also helps with weed control.

Farmers’ markets are up and going by early May. For high quality and a good selection of bedding plants and hanging baskets, check with the local farmers at your market. Producers will also have high quality asparagus, strawberries, lettuce and other greens in May.
Nativars, superhero plants that possess the virtues of native plants but in a more attractive package, make good choices for landscaped areas. Use nativars as part of your gardening “green movement,” said University of Missouri Extension horticulturist David Trinklein.

Native plants earn gardeners’ accolades because they grow naturally in the local environment. They have stood the test of time, weathering Missouri’s varied temperatures, precipitation, pests and soils. Additionally, many attract and preserve pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

Trinklein, however, is among the horticulturists who prefer the ornamental appeal of nativars, a term coined by University of Georgia horticulturist Allan Armitage to describe cultivars selected or hybridized from native species. Nativars offer the benefits of native plants, but their blooms often are more vibrant, larger and showier, Trinklein says. The plants tend to be more compact and neater-looking than the native species from which they were selected. Like native plants, most nativars require little care and are eco-friendly.

Trinklein said two good examples of nativars are purple coneflower “Magnus” and black-eyed Susan “Goldsturm.” Both are selections from native species but have greater eye appeal in the garden. Nativars do have their critics. Purists in the native plant movement do not agree that nativars can be equated to native species, Trinklein says. They suggest nativars vary too much in appearance from their native species and do not attract wildlife equally, especially pollinators.

However, Trinklein says many nativars bloom longer than their purely native relatives. This makes them available to pollinators for a longer period. “Unless your gardening efforts are aimed solely at nurturing wildlife, the next time a landscape situation calls for an attractive, low-maintenance perennial requiring minimal input of natural resources, consider nativars,” Trinklein suggests. “They are proof, contrary to the popular adage, that you can have your cake and eat it too.”

PEACH LEAF CURL

Peach leaf curl is a springtime disease caused by the fungus, *Taphrina deformans*. The fungus overwinters on bud scales, on twigs, and on fallen infected leaves. In spring, the fungal spores are splashed onto newly developing leaves. Infections take place as the buds open. The fungus infects peach buds from bud swell to bud opening under wet conditions. Air temperatures between 50 to 70°F are ideal. Rain or dew moves spores into the opening buds, allowing the infection of young tissue. The disease requires about 10 to 11 hours of wetness for infection to occur. Prolonged cool, wet periods during bud burst can result in severe infections. Early spring applications at or before bud break are effective in controlling this disease.

Apply a protective fungicidal spray after leaf fall in October or November or before bud break in late winter, January through February. After buds have begun to swell, fungicidal sprays are not satisfactory. Do not apply to foliage. Chemicals effective in controlling leaf curl include copper-based fungicides like Bordeaux mixture, Bravo, lime-sulfur spray, or other brands that list the control of peach leaf curl on their label. Products containing ‘chlorthalonil’ (Daconil) may also be used.

Once leaves are infected there is no effective fungicide treatment. The leaves are infected in the bud; once they have emerged they are no longer susceptible to infection. Infected leaves become crinkled, turning pinkish-red. The leaves become thick and powdery with spores as the fungus sporulates. Infected leaves eventually fall off. The tree will grow new leaves.

Peach leaf curl weakens the tree by removing leaves during early growth. This reduces energy the tree can absorb from the sun, weakening the tree, and reduces growth and fruit size. Heavy fruit thinning reduces stress on the tree and increases the likelihood of a marketable crop.

GARDEN TIPS FOR MAY

ORNAMENTALS
- Pinch azaleas and rhododendron blossoms as they fade. Double flowered azaleas need no pinching.
- Fertilize azaleas after bloom. Use a formulation that has an acid reaction.
- Apples, crabapples and hawthorns susceptible to rust disease should have protective fungicidal sprays applied beginning when these trees bloom.
- Plant gladiolus bulbs as the ground warms. Continue at two-week intervals.
- Plant hardy water lilies in tubs or garden pools.
- Continue monitoring pines, especially scotch and mugo, for sawfly activity on new shoots.
- Don’t remove spring bulb foliage prematurely or next year’s flower production will decline. Bulbs can be moved or divided as the foliage dies.
- Canker worms (inch worms) rarely cause permanent damage to ornamentals. Use B.T. if control is deemed necessary.
- Begin planting warm-season annuals.
- Plant summer bulbs such as caladiums, dahlias, cannas, and elephant ears.
- Scale crawlers are active now. Infested pines and euonymus should be treated at this time.
- Trees with a history of borer problems should receive their first spray now. Repeat twice at three-week intervals.
- Begin fertilizing annuals. Continue at regular intervals.
- Pinch back mums to promote bushy growth.

VEGETABLES
- Slugs will hide during the daytime beneath a board placed over damp ground. Check each morning and destroy any slugs that have gathered on the underside of the board.
- Growing lettuce under screening materials will slow bolting and extend harvests into hot weather.
- Place cutworm collars around young transplants. Collars are easily made from cardboard strips.
- Set out tomato plants as soils warm. Place support stakes alongside at planting time. Set out peppers and eggplants after soils warmed. Plant sweet potatoes now.
- Isolate sweet, super sweet and popcorn varieties to prevent crossing.
- Keep asparagus harvested for continued spear production. Control asparagus beetles as needed.
- Thin plantings of carrots and beets to avoid overcrowding.
- Control caterpillars on broccoli and cabbage plants by handpicking or use biological sprays such as B.T.
- Plant dill to use when making pickles.
- Remove rhubarb seeds stalks as they appear.
- Watch for striped and spotted cucumber beetles now. Both may spread wilt and mosaic diseases to squash and cucumber plants.
- Make new sowings of warm-season vegetables after harvesting early crops.

FRUITS
- Mulch blueberries with pine needles or sawdust.
- Don’t spray any fruits while in bloom. Refer to local Extension publications for fruit spray schedule. [http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6010](http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6010)

TURFGRASS
- Mow bluegrass at 1.5 to 2.5 inch height and tall fescues at 2 to 3.5 inches.
- Apply post-emergence broadleaf weed controls now if needed.
- Watch for sod webworms emerging now.

- MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-