SPRINGTIME IN THE LAWN AND GARDEN

By May, cool-season crops should be planted. If not, it is too late to plant some of them. You may already harvested lettuce, spinach, cilantro and radishes. Broccoli should be ready for harvest in late May and early June along with snow peas, kale, and other greens. In June, most of the cool-season vegetables need to be pulled out and the beds replanted with warm-season crops. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, squash and other warm-season crops should be planted after the danger of frost is past, which is typically mid-May. The same applies to annual flowers. If you plant them sooner be prepared to cover them on cold nights. Instead of pulling out broccoli plants after harvesting the center head, leave them in the garden to harvest side shoots all summer. When temperatures cool in the fall the plants put on a growth of florets which can be harvested well past the first frost. Consider incorporating companion plants such as basil, dill, borage, marigolds and nasturtium in and among your warm-season crops. Companion plants benefit each other in pollination, nutrient uptake and pest control. I’ve used companion plants for several years and have noticed a reduction in the insect populations particularly cucumber beetles and squash bugs.

By late May strawberries are ready for harvest in northern Missouri. Strawberries are nutritious and an excellent source of vitamin C and can be used in many different ways from strawberry pancakes to strawberry smoothies. Botrytis Blight also known as Gray Mold, is a common fungal disease of strawberries. Ripe berries are the most susceptible. Avoid heavy applications of nitrogen in the spring. Mulch plants and between rows with clean straw to keep berries from contacting the soil. Pick berries daily if possible and pick all berries that are ripe, preferably early in the day but after the plants are dry, to avoid spreading the causal fungus.

In a rainy spring disease can be an issue with some plants. Monitor all of your plants regularly for insects and disease. Common springtime diseases include Peach Leaf Curl on peaches and nectarines; anthracnose on shade trees; fireblight on apples, pears and some ornamental pears; tar spot on maples; and cedar-apple rust on crabapples and apple trees. Bagworms can be a problem on many plants, but most troublesome on needled evergreens like the spruce, juniper and arborvitae. Remove any bags you find on your trees and shrubs. Control of this pest is best done in late May and early June while the larvae are small. Flea beetles can be a problem on radishes and eggplant. Last year I planted eggplant in large livestock mineral tubs and did not have a
PRUNE SPRING FLOWERING SHRUBS AFTER BLOOM

Pruning is often misunderstood and improperly practiced. Proper pruning is not difficult if a regular maintenance schedule is followed. A plant that has been neglected is difficult to prune. Therefore, pruning should begin before a plant has reached maximum size for the space occupied. When a plant has become too large for normal pruning, it should be replaced. Using dwarf plants in limited spaces reduces pruning needs.

Why prune?
• To improve survival chances at planting time.
• To control size and shape.
• To remove dead, diseased, weak or broken branches.
• To maintain natural beauty.
• To control flowering, fruiting or colored twig effect in certain plants.

The best time for pruning most plants is early spring while the plants are still dormant. Spring flowering shrubs may be pruned at that time, but flowers for that season will be lost. For that reason, spring flowering shrubs are usually pruned as soon as flowering has been completed. Shrubs that flower in late spring and summer are best pruned in early spring. Avoid major pruning in late summer and early fall, as this may force late growth that will be damaged by freezing.

For more information see MU guide G6870 http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6870.

Source: MU guide 6870 by Dr. Christopher J. Starbuck, retired associate professor, Division of Plant Sciences.

TREES VULNERABLE TO STORM DAMAGE

Strong storms are a normal part of Missouri weather during the spring months, and even sometimes in the fall. When those storms bring strong and straight winds, it only takes a few minutes to leave its mark on area trees. A few tree species are greatly affected by strong winds. These include: Bradford Pear, Silver Maple and Green and White Ash.

Structure and growth habit determine trees’ vulnerability to storm damage. Why do strong wind storms impact these species? It has to do with several factors that all involve the growth habit and structure of the tree. Let’s look at some of these factors and how we can help prevent the problems in the future. All these tree species develop narrow crotches or branch angles. Narrow crotches are less structurally sound than wider ninety degree angles. The narrow crotches have less wood connecting the branch to the trunk. When stress occurs such as the weight of a swaying limb it fractures or splits out. In addition to the narrow crotches, there are many branches coming out from about the same location on the tree. This compounds the problem of the narrow crotches as each of these limbs competes for the wood needed to support the tree. This is the main problem with Bradford Pear. As each of the limbs move in the breeze there is great internal stress placed on the branch union and breakage happens. Narrow crotches plague Green and White Ash trees. Many of the ashes also quickly develop internal rot and decay which can weaken the tree, causing emerging limbs to completely snap off at the main trunk. Silver Maples are a tree just waiting for an accident. The wood strength is so soft that it cannot support much weight. This weight causes the limbs to just snap and split out.

What to do with damaged trees. Once damage has occurred, what can be done? Bradford Pears should be removed. Even if only one section split out, the rest of the tree is another storm away from splitting. Do not look at the removal of a Bradford as a lost tree but as an opportunity to plant a new tree. The

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CONTROLLING WEEDS IN YOUR LAWN & GARDEN

Are weeds a problem in your garden, flower beds or even your lawn? Some of the most common garden weeds in Missouri include Dandelion, Ground Ivy (Creeping Charlie), Broadleaf Plantain, Buckhorn Plantain, Crabgrass, Henbit, Chickweed and Violets. Some of these weeds can be hard to control like Creeping Charlie. It grows well in shade or sun. I’ve tried many ways to control this tough weed and have not found anything to be 100% effective, so I tolerate it. White clover is considered a weed by many and hard to control. It is a legume and will fix its own nitrogen, so I tolerate it too. Some weeds like dandelion and plantain can indicate a soil nutrient imbalance or low pH. If your lawn has a lot of weeds, have the soil tested to find out the pH. If the pH is low (acidic), the soil test report will recommend lime to raise the pH to a desirable level, making it harder for weeds to grow. Spraying lawn weeds every year is not the answer. You must correct your soil pH to make it less desirable for some weeds to grow.

Winter annuals like henbit and chickweed germinate in the fall and winter, grow actively in early spring, and complete their life cycle by early summer. You are most likely to find them growing in your garden and flower beds. Their life cycle ends after flowering and producing seeds for the next generation. The plants die and a new crop of weeds emerge from these seeds later in the year. These annual weeds, including summer annuals like foxtail, can be controlled before they emerge by applying a product containing “Trifluralin”. PREEN is a popular brand containing trifluralin and can be used around all non-edible plants. Use organic Preen in vegetable gardens and beds.

If only a few weeds are present in your yard, hand dig them with a forked tool to cut the root off well below ground level. You can also spot treat weeds using undiluted vinegar. It is considered an organic, non-selective method, meaning it kills any plant it touches. It acts by drying out the leaf, which then turns brown, shrivels and dies. You can also use broadleaf herbicides containing 2,4-D, MCPA, MCPP, and dicamba. These are found at most farm supply stores and garden centers. If you choose to use a herbicide, first identify the weed. Then check product labels to determine which herbicide best controls the weeds you have. Be sure to follow label directions. Some weeds may require more than one application. Perennial weeds are best killed when they are actively growing, which is usually in spring and fall. Herbicides applied in the summer are usually less effective.

Weeds can be controlled by shading them out. Cover affected areas with black plastic or fabric, boards, or cardboard until the weeds are dead. I use old strips of carpet between my raised beds to control weeds. Mulch or sawdust will also help with weed control. A thick layer of sawdust around berry plants will help control weeds. Bark mulch can be used around plants in flower beds and landscapes. Mow your lawn grass at three inches to shade out weeds and create a thicker, denser lawn.

Asparagus and strawberry beds need weeded often, possibly several times a week during the growing season. Preen can be applied after harvest to keep annual weed seeds from germinating. Poast is a herbicide that kills grass. Always read the label closely when using this product in and around edible crops. Applying compost or mulch to asparagus and strawberry beds can also help with weed control. I apply compost, the plants grow and spread out and the soil is shaded, making it less desirable for weed growth.

Good maintenance practices such as proper mowing, aerification, fertilization and watering can all lead to a turf that is less favorable for weed growth.

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Silver Maples and Ash should have the damaged branches removed. Any limbs that split out should be pruned back to another branch angle or crotch. Never leave a stub as this will allow rot and decay to enter the tree.

Should the tree be saved or removed? When in doubt about whether to save or remove a tree, it is generally best to remove the tree. Small trees, such as a Bradford, can often be done by the homeowner. Larger trees that require ladder work are best left to a trained professional such as a certified arborist.

Choose replacement tree carefully. The removal of a tree is an opportunity to plant. Avoid the same mistakes by doing research and select a tree species that can withstand most storm damage.

Source of information: Most information for this article was written by Dennis L. Patton, M.S., county horticulture agent, K-State Research and Extension/Johnson County.
GARDEN TIPS FOR MAY

ORNAMENTALS
- Pinch azalea 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 fungidal sprays applied beginning when these trees bloom.
- Begin planting 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.
- Begin fertilizing annuals. Continue at regular intervals.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Set out peppers and eggplants after soils have warmed.
- Plant sweet potatoes now.
- 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 G6010 for the fruit spray schedule.

-MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1 & 2: Magic City Master Gardener Plant Sale, James Youth Bldg., Rothwell Park, Friday 4-7 pm; Saturday 9-1.
May 2: Opening day of Kirksville Farmers’ Market, west side of Kirksville square, 7-12.
May 2: Salt River Master Gardeners Annual Plant Sale, 8-12, Y Men’s Pavilion, downtown Hannibal. Large assortment of vegetables, herbs, annual plants, and hanging baskets, as well as Mother’s Day gifts, gardening items and books.
May 23: Kirksville Area Master Gardener Plant Sale, at the Farmers’ Market, Kirksville square.
June 1: Garden n’ Grow starts in Kirksville. Registration forms are available on the webpage or at the extension office. 660-665-9866.
August 2015: Master Gardener training, Kirksville; Wednesdays, 1-4 pm. If interested contact me. We must have 10 to have a class. Master Gardener training is also offered online each semester. The next class will be offered in the September. Sign up on the state Master Gardener homepage at http://mg.missouri.edu/.