



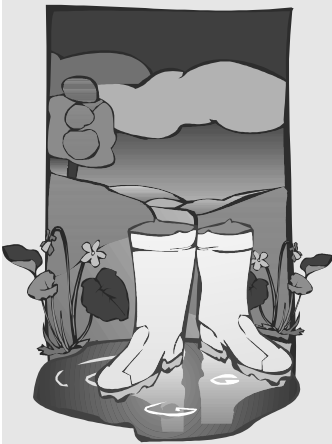
Garden Talk!

for the Heartland Garden Enthusiast

March 2003

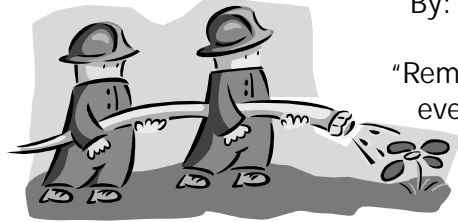
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A Spouse's Guide to Garden Watering

By: [Michael Hillman](#)



"Remember, the yellow verbena only gets watered every other day, everything else in that bed gets water every day," hurriedly noted my Master Gardener wife as she packed the last of her clothes for her long trip. "Got it. Yellow Ver -

bean-um, once every other day, everything else twice a day . . . Um, err, one more time. Where's the bed again?" I shyly asked. "It's the one across from the pond. Also, remember to feed the fish." "Fish? Fish? When did we get fish?" My wife closed her suitcase and sighed. "Six years ago . . ."

I'm sure if you polled Master Gardeners on what their worst nightmares are, leaving their gardens in the care, even if only temporarily, of well meaning, horticulturally challenged spouses, probably ranks at the top. I've long ago given up keeping track of the plants that now call my wife's many gardens home. Prior to becoming an Master Gardener, she was satisfied with a simple garden containing flowers, which I could not only recognize, but who's names I could pronounce without major contortions of my lips. By the time she received her Master Gardener certificate, her gardens had quadrupled in size. The simple varieties that once graced the walkways, perfectly good plants as far as I was concerned, had been pulled out, replaced by obscure, albeit 'native', plants. Having been given a taste of how spectacular her gardens could be, she moved on to more advance and focused training at Longwood Garden. Each new class brought eclectic new plant additions, and with them, new garden layouts. When existing gardens could no longer meet her needs, she simply appropriated more of our ever-diminishing lawn. Soon she was buying weed killer in barrel containers, not to kill weeds, but to eradicate whole portions of the yard to accommodate her latest shade garden, raised bed garden, or butterfly garden.

As one can imagine, the daily maintenance of such an extensive array of gardens is a Herculean task at best. A task best suited for a Master Gardener, not a Master Gardener spouse! While I have always been ready and willing to help, the scope of my 'acceptable' services has diminished inversely to the growth in the size and complexity of the gardens. At first, I was entrusted with planting 'hardy' plants, ones that didn't need the fine touch of a Master Gardener. But my unique ability to step on the most fragile plant in the bed gave her pause. Given my unique ability to kill any plant I touched, weeding seemed a natural. But I got fired from that position for failing to master the technique of pulling weeds out by the root. Since then, my help in the garden has been limited to 'safe' activities, like dumping buckets of rocks over the fence line. Anything more than that, my wife claims, would be hazardous to the health and well-being of the gardens. So, when my wife inquired if I would be willing to take responsibility for watering while she visited her parents for a week, I jumped at the chance to prove myself.

(continued on next page)

A Spouse's Guide to Garden Watering (continued from cover)...

After all, how hard could watering be? I quickly learned that there was much more to watering than turning on the hose, opening a beer, and standing around waiting to get bitten by mosquitoes. Apparently, one of the first things you learn when you become a full fledged Master Gardener, is the secret equation for determining just how much water a plant needs on a daily basis. The equation is made up of several basic components. At first glance, it was fairly simplistic, and compared to running a nuclear power plant, seemed like child's play. Factors Master Gardeners take into consideration include: deepness of the roots (DR) - the deeper, the less frequent the need for watering; plant height or the tallness of the plant (T) - the taller the plant, the more need for watering; leaf width (L) - the wider the leaf, the more need for watering. Of course, flowering plants (FP), need more water than non-flowering (NFP) plants. Or, in mathematical speak: $((T \times L)/DR) \times (FP/NFP)$ A good Master Gardener then adds in some fudge factors. For example: the closer the proximity of plants in a bed (PP) - the less you have to water; the windier the day (WD), the more you have to water; the sunnier the spot (SS) - the more one needs to water; the shadier (SS1) - the less you need to water. Or more simply: $(WD \times SS)/(PP \times SS1)$ Then, of course, one needs to factor in whether the soaker hoses you've been meaning to replace for the past five years leak more at the top or the bottom of the bed (SHL), the number of mosquito bites you're willing to accept in any one time period (MSB), and the number of times you're willing to fuss with a hose that always seems to kink at the worst possible time (HK). Or more simply, $(SHL)/(MSB \times HQ)$

Put together, the equation on how much and how often to water just *one plant* in a plant in a Master Gardener's garden looks like this: $((T \times L)/DR) \times (FP/NFP) \times ((WD \times SS)/(PP \times SS1)) \times ((WD \times SS)/(PP \times SS1))$. As a point of comparison, the equation that describes the chain reaction within a nuclear power plant has only six factors, and to calculate that requires some pretty heavy computing power. How Master Gardeners can juggle all these factors and calculations in their head and get it right every time is beyond me, but they do, and their gardens always look beautiful.

Given that the results of my first calculation for my wife's garden — 300 inches of water — was a little bit suspect, I ran the equation on my computer. It crashed halfway through and has refused to start since. Realizing that what was left of my reputation as 'mindless' garden help was now at risk, I did the only thing I could think of — I multiplied the whole equation by zero, subtracted 1, and began to water like my wife buys plants: non-stop.

Every morning I raced the sun to the garden. Juggling the coffee IV and the watering hose took a little getting used to at first, but it was rewarding. Every garden was filled with a capricious array of colors and fragrances. Drooping plants, almost instantaneously rose to meet the rays of the sun after receiving their fill. Bugs of every shape and size, invisible to those who hurry through gardens, suddenly became ever-present. And for the first time, I realized that my wife had not simply created gardens, but whole worlds unto themselves. Everyday I discovered a new collection of potted plants squirreled away in some corner of a garden, all with intended purposes that only my wife could reveal, and all of course, now desperately wilted from lack of water. In spite of my efforts, it was apparent that I was losing the watering battle. Pulling out all the stops, I fired up the soaker hoses and even enlisted the help of local kids, all to no apparent avail. Finally in desperation, I contacted a local pool water company, and after being assured the water was untreated, contracted for a shipment. As I stood watching the deluge from the tanker flood the gardens, my wife called to check in and remind me: ". . . Remember, over-watering is as bad as under-watering . . ."

Seventeen Complete Master Gardener Training In Milan; training underway in Kirksville, soon to be in Brookfield

Seventeen individuals from Sullivan county recently completed Master Gardener training held in Milan. Classes started October 28 and ended on February 3. An organizational club meeting is planned for March 6 at 6:30 at the USDA office in Milan. Persons in the county or surrounding area who have completed training elsewhere but have not joined a club, are encouraged to join and attend meetings.

Twenty-eight people are currently taking Master Gardener training being held every Monday night in Kirksville. Training classes began February 10 and will continue through April 28. Master Gardener training classes will soon be starting in Brookfield. Training will start March 10 at the Brookfield Area Career Center and run through May 26.

SPRING FORWARD INTO GARDENING.....

WHAT: Educational Workshop Sponsored By: Salt River Master Gardeners & University Outreach & Extension

Six Morning Sessions to choose from:

- Container Gardening
- Create the Next Best Thing
- Culinary Herbs
- Daylilies
- Hostas-Jewels of the Shade Garden
- Pesticides

Creating Gardens for the Soul: Afternoon Keynote Speaker-Linda Kraft
Linda is a St. Louis garden designer and writer who views her work as "The fine Art of Garden Design". The afternoon lecture will explore what a garden for the soul is, why we love to garden, how gardens bring beauty, depth, and meaning into our lives, and how to create a garden for the soul.

WHO: open to all master gardeners and anyone interested in gardening. Spread the word, bring a friend!

WHEN: Saturday, April 5, 2003; 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Partee Center at Hannibal LaGrange College, Highway 61, Hannibal, Missouri

COST: \$25, includes lunch; make checks payable to Salt River Master Gardeners. Registration deadline is March 28; NO REFUNDS after March 28.

For more information contact Alix Carpenter at 573-769-2177.

PLANT PROFILE: Astilbe

Scientific Name: *Astilbe x arendsii*

Flowers: upright, often plumed flower clusters bear tightly packed, fuzzy blooms in shades of red, pink, rose, lilac, cream, and white
Bloom Time: spring through early to mid-summer in Missouri
Size: 2-4 feet tall; 2-3 feet wide; leafy clumps spread steadily outward. Each clump maintains a distinct crown.

Hardiness: zones 3-9

Culture: evenly moist, slightly acidic, humus-rich soil; dry soil will result in shriveled foliage; full to partial shade

Propagation: propagate the true species by sowing fresh seed outdoors in summer or early fall; propagate cultivars by spring or fall division.

Landscape Uses: plant at sides of water gardens where their plumes are reflected in the water. In borders combine them with lungworts, hostas, and wildflowers.

Disease & Insect Susceptibility: spider mites may be a problem in warm areas; spray with insecticidal soap when necessary. Control root rot with good drainage and air circulation.

DEER RESISTANT PLANTS

The following is a partial list of common landscape plants that are unlikely to be damaged by deer.

Annuals, Perennials, & Bulbs

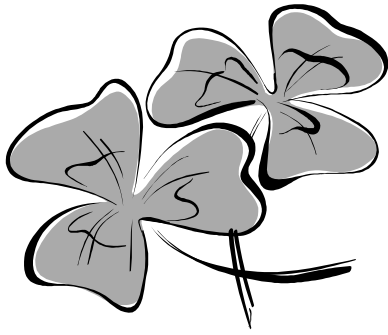
Yarrow	Bleeding Heart	Oriental Poppy	Ageratum
Foxglove	Scented Geranium	Japanese Anemone	Wood Fern
Russian Sage	Common Dill	Purple Coneflower	Buttercup
Columbine	Euphorbia	Rhubarb	Snapdragon
Stella de Oro Daylily	Coneflower (<i>Rudbeckia</i> sp.)	Rock cress	Hyacinth
Sage	Jack-in-the-Pulpit	Deadnettle	Lamb's Ears
Berginia	Lavender	Marigold	Snakeroot
Toadflax	Common Tansy	Larkspur	Sweet Alyssum
Thyme	Lily-of-the Valley	Daffodil	Nasturtium
Treadleaf Coreopsis	Flowering Tobacco	Yucca	

Woody Ornamentals

Heritage Birch	Paper Birch	Colorado Blue Spruce	Scotch Pine
Douglas Fir	Paw Paw	Barberry	Boxwood
American Bittersweet	Red Osier Dogwood	Russian Olive	Rose of Sharon
Common Buckthorn			

THE SHAMROCK

By: Nancy Knotts, Kirksville Area Master Gardener



Did you know there is no such thing as a Shamrock Plant? The word shamrock comes from the Irish word 'seamrog' meaning 'little clover'. But there are hundreds of varieties of clover. The question iswhat is the 'Original Irish Shamrock'? Some authorities believe that it is the white clover. The clover occupied a position in the cultural life of early people. White clover in particular was held in high esteem by the early Celts of Wales as a charm against evil spirits. This pagan tradition was continued by early Christian leaders and became the symbol of the Holy Trinity for the Irish people.

The name 'Shamrock' is used to describe several different plants. The Shamrock is described as a plant with leaves composed of three leaflets. Those plants portrayed most as Shamrocks are White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Black Medic (*Medicago lupulina*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Hop Clover (*Trifolium minus*), and Lucky Shamrock (*Oxalis deppei*).

Saint Patrick the famed 'Patron Saint of Ireland' used the plant to illustrate the Holy Trinity. Shamrocks have been considered good-luck symbols by the Irish since the early times, and this superstition is still held today by many modern people of many nationalities.

Plant History: White clover, *trifolium repens* L. is considered by many to be the Original Irish Shamrock. Occasionally, a rare fourth leaf occurs, resulting in the 'Lucky Four-leaf Clover'.

Plant Characteristics: White Clover is a low growing perennial herb. The plant grows from the tip by sending out 'runners' that take root, these 'runners' are formed from each rooting point. The seeds are produced in a fluffy white flower head. For White Clover to prosper, it should be grown in full sun to light shade, and the soil should be well drained and moist. If grown indoors, they must be kept in a sunny location so that the stems won't 'stretch' and the plant won't look 'leggy', with small leaves.

Growing From Seed:

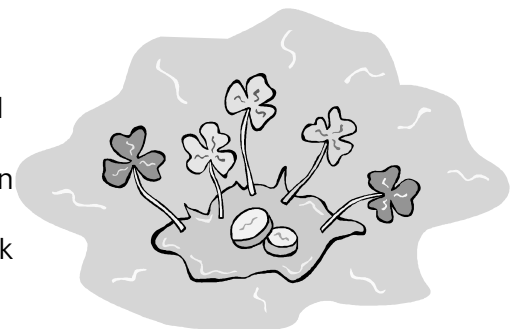
1. Seeds may be sown in small pots or trays using peat pellets, peat pots, or moist well drained soil.
2. The seeds are very small and should be placed on the moist surface or lightly covered with soil. A clear dome or plastic cover should be placed over the top (supported at least 2" above the surface) and the whole thing placed in a warm shaded location until the seeds germinate. This takes approximately a week. The top of fridge is a good place.
3. Once the seeds have germinated and the first 'seed' leaf appears (this will be a single leaf), remove the cover and place in a sunny location, keep moist and do not allow soil to dry out. Only water, do not fertilize.
4. When two or three true clover leaves have formed, then you can begin to fertilize.

Transplanting: Transplant when roots appear at the bottom of the pot or tray. Transplant carefully if you started your Shamrocks in soil mix. Otherwise place the entire peat pot or pellet in the soil. Water and fertilize as before.

Indoor Care: Keep plants well watered and with good drainage. Keep in a sunny location. Remove dead or damaged leaves, and trim 'runners' that extend over the pot.

A Lucky Garden

Gardens, especially ones designed with a purpose, will attract beneficial creatures as well as fairies and gnomes. Cultivate a nine foot circular patch of earth. Around the perimeter, place small stones and crystals. In the center place a stone garden gnome. Around the gnome plant a mixture of marigolds and clover. This type of garden is said to bring luck and fortune to the gardener that tends it.



Gardening Tips For March

VEGETABLES

- Fertilize the garden as the soil is being prepared for planting. Unless directed otherwise by a soil test, 1-2 pounds of 12-12-12 or an equivalent fertilizer per 100 square feet is usually sufficient.
- Cultivate weeds and remove old, dead stalks of last years' growth from the asparagus bed before new spears emerge.
- Delay planting if the garden soil is too wet.
- Asparagus and rhubarb roots should be planted as soon as the ground can be worked.
- Plant peas, lettuce, radishes, mustard greens, turnips, Irish potatoes, spinach, & onions (seeds & sets) outdoors.
- Plant beets, carrots, parsley, and parsnip seeds outdoors. Set out broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, and cauliflower transplants into the garden.
- Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants indoors.

ORNAMENTALS

- To control Iris borer, clean up and destroy old foliage before new growth begins.
- Fertilize bulbs with a "bulb booster" formulation broadcast over the planting beds.
- Loosen winter mulches from perennials cautiously.
- Dormant mail order plants should be unwrapped immediately. Keep roots from drying out.
- Trees, shrubs, and perennials may be planted as soon as they become available at local nurseries.
- Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor's buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- Heavy pruning of trees should be complete before growth occurs. Trees should not be pruned while the new leaves are growing.
- Summer and fall blooming perennials should be divided in spring.
- Apply sulfur to the soils around acid-loving plants such as Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Hollies, and Dogwoods. Use a granular formulation at the rate of ½ pound per 100 square feet.
- Apply a balanced fertilizer such as 6-12-12 to perennial beds when new growth appears.
- Spring bedding plants such as pansies and toadflax may be planted now.
- Ornamental grasses should be cut to the ground just as the new growth begins.
- Gradually start to pull back mulch from rose bushes.

FRUITS

- Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as the weather begins to warm.
- Continue pruning grapes. Bleeding causes no injury to the vines.
- Continue pruning apple trees. Burn or destroy all prunings to minimize insect or disease occurrence.
- Cleft and splice grafting can be done now. This must be completed before the rootstocks break dormancy.
- Apply dormant oil sprays now. Choose a dry day when freezing temperatures are not expected.
- Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl disease.
- Aphids begin to hatch on fruit trees as the buds begin to open.
- Peaches and nectarines should be pruned just before they bloom.
- Mulch all bramble fruits for weed control.

HOUSEPLANTS

- Repot root bound plants, moving them to containers 2 inches larger in diameter than their current pot.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Set up nesting boxes for bluebirds.
- Spicebush is blooming in moist woodlands.
- Red Maples begin to bloom.
- Watch for fuzzy blooms of the Pussy Willows.

LAWN AND TURF

- Mow lawns low to remove old growth before new growth begins.
- Apply controls for wild garlic. It will take several years of annual applications for complete control.
- Apply broadleaf herbicides now for control of cool-season perennial and annual weeds. These must not be applied to areas that will be seeded soon.
- Thin spots and bare patches in the lawn can be overseeded now.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 10: Master Gardener training starts in Brookfield. Contact Dr. Leon McIntyre at the Linn County Extension Center at 660-895-5123 for more information.

March 10: Lewis County Extension Night; gardening sessions that night include "What You Need To Know About Vegetable Gardening", Gardening Do's & Don'ts" and "Everything's Coming Up Roses". For more information contact the Lewis County Extension Center at 573-767-5273.

March 11: Shelby County Extension Night; gardening sessions that night include "What You Need To Know About Vegetable Gardening" and Gardening Do's & Don'ts". For more information contact the Shelby County Extension Office at 573-633-2640.

March 13: Knox County Extension Night; gardening sessions that night include "What You Need To Know About Vegetable Gardening" and Gardening Do's & Don'ts". For more information contact the Knox County Extension office at 660-397-2179.

March 25: Part 1-Legal Checkup Workshop: a Legal Checkup tells you if you are healthy, or if you need to take action. You may be able to handle it yourself, or you may wish to consult a lawyer, a financial planner, or other professional. The checkup will help you recognize a problem and decide how to solve or avoid it. For more information about the workshop contact Nancy Flood at 660-947-2705.

April 5: "Spring Forward Into Gardening", educational workshop sponsored by Salt River Master Gardeners, Partee Center at Hannibal LaGrange College; for more information or to register contact Alix Carpenter at 573-769-2177.

April 29: Part 2-Legal Checkup Workshop

Check out these guidesheets at your local county university extension center.

- G6010 - Fruit Spray Schedules
- G6201 - Vegetable Planting Calendar
- G6570 - Starting Plants from Seeds
- G6600 - Roses: Selecting and Planting
- G6650 - Flowering Perennials: Characteristics and Culture
- G6750 - Home Lawn Weed Control
- G6800 - Selecting Landscape Plants: Shade Trees
- G6902 - Low-Maintenance Landscaping
- G6954 - Soil Testing for Lawns
- G7200 - White Grubs in the Lawn
- G9440 - Controlling Nuisance Moles



Garden Talk!

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