

April 2014 Master Gardeners of Johnson County News Article

More Gardening Mishaps to Avoid

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Previously, we identified gardening problems encountered and perhaps yet to be encountered by the young and old, and hobbyist and professional gardeners. Such mishaps as placing the wrong plants in the wrong place, over and under watering and fertilizing, indiscriminate bug spraying, and mistaking flowers for weeds were highlighted in these earlier topics. Here are more gardening mishaps we would be better off avoiding.

The snow is melting and the prospects of new and exciting plants are once again in the offering. Pick wisely. Refrain from some of those non-native plants that are no doubt grand but often take more than enthusiasm, hard work, and money to grow well. Think about the whole growing year before you plant. And did you know that many inside plants, specifically the non-native ones, sometimes require high constant humidity and special care? Many American homes have low internal moisture environments and this may not bode well for sensitive plants. And then there are some bad plants. Take the time to find out what the invasive plants for the area are and please avoid planting them. Don't know what they are then contact the Extension office, <http://extension.missouri.edu/> or the Master Gardeners website, <http://extension.missouri.edu/johnson/MasterGardenersJoCoMO.aspx> or visit our Facebook page, Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri (while you're on the page please "like" us and feel free to type up any questions). A second issue is pragmatic and comes at you in two parts. The first is to know your plants from top to the very bottom. The second part is to not locate plants (particularly big ones e.g. trees) close to a building's foundation. Or, too near sewer pipes, laterals, or even water wells if you have them. Aggressive plant roots can play havoc with toughest foundations causing expensive and ugly repairs. The old advice about looking before the leaping is quite important when it comes to digging holes in the modern yard. Be sure the hole you are digging for aunt Millie's lilacs doesn't have a live electric wire or communication cable running through it. Cutting a 230 volt electric line will do more than make your hair stand on end for the remainder of the week. In some cases it could translate to a not so happy gardener "pushing up daisies". And there is the underground cable only an inch or two from the surface. Cut that cable and the sometimes grouchy next door neighbor will throw a sundown fit in your front yard because a favorite TV show is "off-air". Error on the side of caution and make sure about this potentially dangerous situation.

Clay soil can be the source of many gardeners' humiliation. All too often gardeners neglect soil preparation. Maybe it's getting one's hands dirty that's the problem. If the gardener wants happy contented plants that are fun to talk to and a joy to behold then prep that soil. Experienced gardeners know that some plants such as pansies, marigolds, etc. prefer a well-balanced soil while others like azaleas, gardenias, etc. like acid in the soil. Provide the right soil, a bit of TLC, the right amount of water, and your plants will grow like crazy. The local library, Trails Regional, has a wonderful collection of gardening books with all kinds of gardening know how. Just as good soil starts a plant off right plant maintenance comes into its own as a means to sustain a happy and handsome plant. Heading is an art that is also an earmark of the accomplished and caring gardener. And there is pruning. Many plants,

bushes and trees particularly, are helped along the way to a happier and more sensible life through careful and knowledgeable pruning. It is a subject requiring sound information about the plant and practice on the part of the gardener. Having sharp loppers and the right saws help too.

To kind of toot a horn, and as mentioned earlier, the Master Gardeners have a gardening Help Desk located in the local MU Extension Office (they are in cahoots with them), and a Master Gardener's Facebook page that you can go to for gardening help. More gardening articles are planned and spring is coming. Thanks for reading this article and Happy Gardening