

The Garden Corner

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With any luck at all, we've seen the last of winter and can start a serious program of planting. However, keep in mind our average date for the last frost is April 15th which has not change even though we are in the new zone of 6b. When you do decide to begin, here are some hints to improve your chances of success.

Much like real estate, "location, location, and location" is a critical element when planning, placing, or planting a garden. If the plant requires "full sun"; then place it in a spot that will get at least 6 hours of exposure. Partial sun requirements can be met by locating the plant where it will enjoy several hours of morning sun; but, goes into the shade by early afternoon. Never be afraid to experiment – if it doesn't work where you thought it would, simply move the plant to another location.

Dirt (or soil for the obsessive compulsive among us) is your next major concern. We covered amending your soil last month. Here are some additional tidbits to add to your growing arsenal. By taking the time to improve (amend) the new home for your plant, you accomplish several jobs at once. Will you need to add fertilizer? Probably not. How about developing a program to combat disease and pests? If you have a healthy plant and you put it in the correct place with good dirt, the plant will grow beautifully and as a bonus, it will develop its own strategies to remain healthy and to fend off pests. One additional thought: Decide early on how much damage you are willing to tolerate before grabbing that bag or can of pesticide and/or herbicide and wage war. All of us – the birds, bugs, and human critters share the same planet – just a thought.

Unless you are growing your plants from seeds or are digging up and splitting them from your place or a neighbor's garden (ask first please!) you will have to purchase the material. Before proceeding to the checkout, do yourself a favor and gently press upward on the container to expose the roots of your new jewel. You want the roots to be as white as possible. The more yellow or darkish brown they are the more difficult it will be for you to grow.

Finally the all-important use of water: Let's dispel a popular myth or rumor – all plants must have an inch of water per week. Most of the growing season this rule of thumb is totally spot on; however, when July and August arrive with their high heat and humidity, an inch per week will not work. Let the plant tell you when it needs water. As with most things in life, let experience be your guide. And, if at all possible, perform your watering routine early in the day. Not only will you reduce the likelihood of mildew but you will be saving water from the loss of evaporation in the heat of the day.

As always, for your specific questions/comments, write to: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email me at: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I'll get right back with you.