

GARDEN CHATTER

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The Official Publication of Laclede County Master Gardeners



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The next couple of months Garden him and him Chatter will be devoted to TOMATOES!

That is the number one vegetable that Americans grow in their gardens, patios, decks, pots and planters.



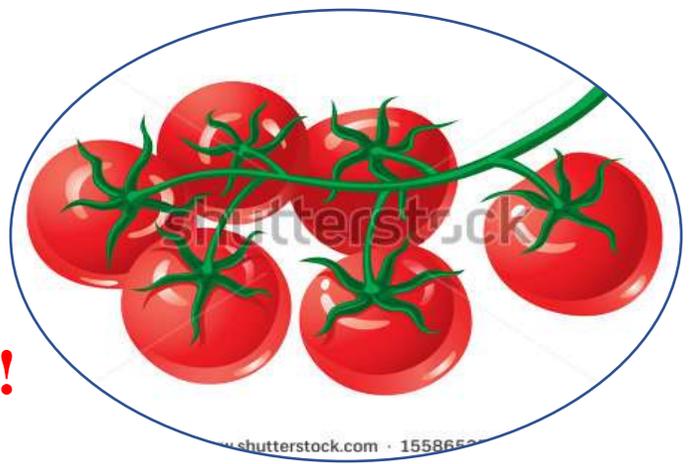
Any time you start talking about gardening the conversation always begins and/or leads to tomatoes. It seems the true goal of any gardener is to have a ripe tomato before the Fourth of July. I will say this is it possible to do but in many instances it's very difficult to do because of the length of time it takes to grow tomato. Some of your 55 and 60 day tomatoes make by that date, but not very often.

First off, the tomato has no business being planted before May 15. That is when the ground begins to warm up sufficiently to help that tomato plant grow, blossom, and produce. Any time before that your tomato is just going to sit in the ground and take up space. However I will tell you that the lack of are the stream cold weather this spring has made this year and exception rather than the rule. So I along with many others already have a tomato of almost baseball size that will be right before July 4.

And Tomatoes,

Tomatoes –

The Hallmark of Gardening!



And The following is from the University of Virginia and their definitions and suggestions on growing tomatoes. The one that is of most interest you'll find towards the end and that talks about the setting and dropping of blossoms. This has mainly to do with the temperatures of the area and that time of year.

Based on plant characteristics -

- (a) **Midget, patio, or dwarf** tomato varieties have very compact vines best grown in hanging baskets or other containers. The tomatoes produced may be, but are not necessarily, the cherry type (1 inch diameter or less). Some produce larger fruit. These plants are usually short-lived, producing their crop quickly and for a short period.
- (b) **Compact or determinate** tomato plants refers to the plant habit of growing to a certain size, setting fruit, and then declining. Most of the early ripening tomato varieties are determinate and will not produce tomatoes throughout the normal growing year.
- (c) **Indeterminate** tomato plants are the opposite of the determinate types. The vines continue to grow until frost or disease kills them. These are the standard, all-summer tomatoes that most people like to grow. They require support of some kind for best results, since otherwise the fruit would be in contact with the soil, thus susceptible to rot.

Based on fruit characteristics -

- (a) **Cherry** tomatoes have small, cherry-sized (or a little larger) fruits often used in salads. Plants of cherry tomatoes range from dwarf (Tiny Tim) to seven-footers (Sweet 100). One standard cherry tomato plant is usually sufficient for a family, since they generally produce abundantly.
- (b) **Beefsteak** type tomatoes are large-fruited types, producing a tomato slice that easily covers a sandwich, the whole fruit weighing as much as two pounds or more. These are usually late to ripen, so plant some standard-sized or early tomatoes for longest harvest.
- (c) **Paste** tomatoes have pear-shaped fruits with very meaty interiors and few seeds. They are less juicy than standard tomatoes and are without a sizeable central core. Paste tomatoes are a favorite for canning since they don't have to be cut up and since they are so meaty.
- (d) **Color** of tomatoes include orange, yellow, pink, or striped, and often the only way to get a specific one is by growing your own. Most are heritage varieties obtained through seed-saver groups. Tests have shown that there is no relationship between color and acidity of tomatoes.
- (e) **Winter storage tomatoes** are a relatively new item for gardeners. The plants are set out later in the season than most tomatoes and fruit are harvested partially ripe. If properly stored, they will stay fresh for twelve weeks or more. While the flavor does not equal that of summer vine-ripened tomatoes, many people prefer them to grocery store tomatoes in winter. One of the most common ways to store tomatoes for the winter is to wrap each individual tomato in newsprint, packing them gently in a cardboard box

and setting in a closet or dark area. You will find that you will have ripe tomatoes all the way to New Year's. But be sure and check in from time to time for some will go bad.

Planting Tomatoes

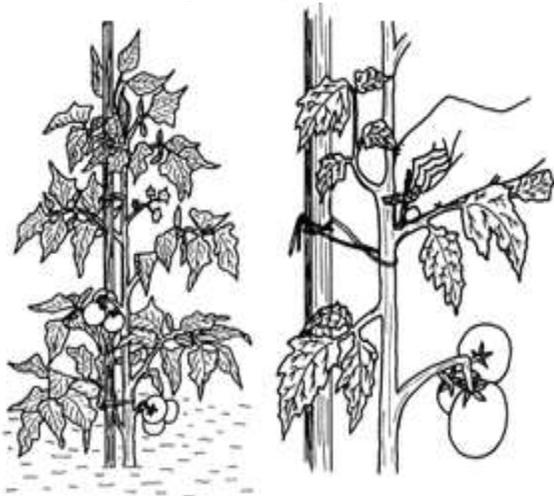
Tomato plants may be started indoors from seed or transplants may be purchased. If starting your own plants, use a light soil mix and give the plants plenty of light. Tall, spindly transplants are usually caused by low light levels in the home. Unless you have a sunny, south-facing window, supplemental light will probably be necessary. The seeds are sown six to eight weeks before the last frost date in your area. A few weeks before transplanting time, harden-off indoor-grown plants by exposing them to an increasing number of hours outdoors each day. Bring plants in if there is danger of frost. A few varieties of tomato (the sub-arctics) are bred to grow well in low spring temperatures; however, these are rarely available in the usual markets and ordinarily must be grown from seed.

When you are ready to put home-grown or purchased plants into the ground, select stocky transplants about 6 to 10 inches tall. Set tomato transplants in the ground covering the stems so that only two or three sets of true leaves are exposed. Horizontal planting of tomato plants is an effective way to make plants grow stronger, especially leggy ones. Roots will form along the buried portion of the stem, giving better growth and less chance of plant injury from a too-weak stem. Do not remove the containers if they are peat or paper pots, but open or tear off one side to allow roots to get a good start. If non-biodegradable containers are used, knock the plants out of the pots before transplanting, and loosen the roots somewhat. Press the soil firmly around the transplant so that a slight depression is formed for holding water. Pour approximately one pint of starter solution or dilute fish emulsion around each plant to wash the soil around the roots.

Will will Plants should be staked or caged. Though it requires more work, this makes caring for tomatoes easier than letting them sprawl. they are off the ground, fruit rots are reduced, spraying is easier and may required less, and harvesting is much less work. For staking, space them inches apart in rows 3 feet apart. Use wooden stakes 6 feet long and 1 1 inches wide. Drive them 1 foot into the soil about 4 to 6 inches from the soon after transplanting. Attach heavy twine or strips of cloth to the



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stakes



every 10 inches. As the plants grow, pull the stems toward the stakes and tie loosely. Prune staked tomatoes to either one or two main stems. At the junction of each leaf and the first main stem a new shoot will develop. If plants are trained to two stems, choose one of these shoots, normally at the first or second leaf-stem junction, for the second main stem. Remove all other shoots, called suckers, weekly to keep the plant to these two main stems. Pinch shoots off with your fingers. Tomato plants may also be set along a fence or trellis and tied and pruned in a manner similar to that used with stakes. Growing tomatoes in wire cages is one method popular among gardeners because of its simplicity. Cage-growing allows the tomato plant to grow in its natural manner, but keeps the fruit and leaves off the ground. Using wire cages requires a large initial expenditure and a large storage area, but

many gardeners feel that the freedom from pruning and staking is worth it. The cages, if heavy duty, will last many years. Be sure to get fencing with at least 6 inch spacing between wires so that you can get your hand inside to harvest the tomatoes. If tomato plants in wire cages are pruned at all, once is enough; prune to three or four main stems. Wire-cage tomatoes develop a heavy foliage cover, reducing sunscald on fruits and giving more leeway when bottom leaves become blighted and have to be removed. Many staked plants are nearly

naked by late summer. Caged plants are less prone to the spread of disease from plant handling, since they do not have open wounds and must be handled less frequently than staked plants. However, it helps to space the plants somewhat further apart (3 feet is good) to allow good air circulation between plants; humidity is higher because of the foliage density, and diseases, such as late blight, spread rapidly in humid situations. If well-nourished and cared for, caged tomatoes can produce exceptional harvests and make up for the extra space with high production. This type of culture is especially suited to indeterminate varieties.

Causes of Poor Tomato Fruit Set

Fruit Set. The transition of a flower into a young fruit is very sensitive to several environmental factors over which gardeners have some control. Following is a brief discussion of some of the causes of poor tomato fruit set with particular emphasis on urban gardening.

Temperature and Humidity. Daytime temperatures above 90°F and night temperatures above 70°F result in reduced flowering and fruit set. There is considerable evidence that night temperature is the critical factor in setting tomato fruit, the optimal range being 59° to 68°F. With night temperatures much below or above this critical range, fruiting is reduced or absent. Low temperatures reduce the production and viability of pollen. High temperature, especially if accompanied by low humidity and moisture, hinders fruit set through failure in pollination and/or fertilization.

Tomato plants can drop their blossoms for any of the following high or too low temperatures, lack of pollinating insects, too much or nitrogen, too much or too little humidity, lack of water, or stress from damage. Try an artist's brush to see if you can pollinate the blossoms brushing pollen on the flowers. If that doesn't help I bet it's related to weather conditions.



reasons: too too little insect or disease yourself by your local

Plant Nutrition. Reduced fruiting may result from either stunted or vigorous vegetative growth. Injury from disease and insects, sucking insects such as aphids and thrips, can severely check growth. moisture and/or available nitrogen can hinder growth and flower. Conversely, abundant water and nitrogen can stimulate rapid growth with low levels of carbohydrates remaining for the normal processes involved in fruit set.

excessively especially Inadequate production. vegetative

Garden sites located on heavy subsoils are infertile and poorly drained. Gardeners create faulty nutrition by either not applying any fertilizer or by adding too much. In addition, water for irrigation is often not available during times of drought.

Photoperiod (length of day). Although the tomato plant can flower and fruit at any daylength (day neutral plant), fruit set has been shown to be retarded under continuous light. Thus, tomato fruit set may be reduced under the continuous illumination characteristic of some environments.

CULTURAL: Blossom-end rot, irregular soil moisture or calcium deficiency; poor color, yellow spots or large whitish-gray spots, sunscald from lack of foliage cover; leaf roll, physiological condition often found in pruned tomatoes; fruit cracking, irregular soil moisture; black walnut wilt, caused by roots of tomato plants coming in contact with toxin from black walnut tree.

HARVEST: Harvest fully vine-ripened but still firm. Picked tomatoes should be placed in shade. Light is not necessary for ripening immature tomatoes but it is necessary for color development. Some green tomatoes may be picked before the first killing frost and stored in a cool (55°F), moist (90% relative humidity) place. When desired, ripen fruits at 70°F.

Heirloom Tomatoes

Heirloom tomato varieties are treasures from the past. Chosen for outstanding flavor, color, or overall performance, they can be grown in your garden, but probably never found in a supermarket.

With the change in trends of food production after WWII, there came a need to develop tomatoes that could be harvested green, withstand shipping, etc., and maintain a good, uniform appearance. These qualities were achieved through hybridizing. The sacrifice of this breeding was flavor - which, in recent years, scientists have been trying to re-introduce. Though hybridized tomatoes have their place, heirloom tomatoes definitely surpass them in one general characteristic - their taste.

Here are some common heirloom tomato varieties you may want to try:

Big Rainbow - This very large tomato is a gold/red bicolor, and is described as being meaty and mild-flavored.

Brandywine - This large beefsteak variety tomato is legendary for its "exceptionally rich, succulent flavor" and "old-fashioned tomato taste." An Amish heirloom, it is solid pink-red.

Green Zebra - This green and yellow tomato has "a sweet zingy flavor" and is "as sweet as an apple." It is beautiful when served with yellow, red, orange and pink varieties.

Yellow Pear - This variety produces an endless supply of yellow, bite-sized, pear-shaped fruit that have a mild flavor.

GREEN TOMATO PICKLE

½ pack green tomatoes (thinly sliced)
2 pounds onions (thinly sliced)
5 green peppers (chopped in blender)
8 cloves, whole
½ pound brown sugar

¼ ounce celery seed
1 ounce white mustard seed
1 hot red pepper
8 whole allspice
1 cup salt
1 bay leaf
½ gallon vinegar

Put tomatoes, onions and pepper in crock and sprinkle with salt. Let stand overnight. Next morning, drain and cover with cold water for 30 minutes. Drain and pat dry and cover with vinegar. Add sugar, celery seed and mustard seed. Tie the pepper pod, allspice, bay leaf, and cloves in cheesecloth and drop in mixture. Cook for 1½ hours, stirring constantly. Remove cheesecloth bag and fill in sterilized jars and seal.

OLD NORTH STATE COOKBOOK

Hydrangea: The chameleon of plants

From the Easter season through Mother's Day, hydrangea is one of the most sought-after flowering plants from retail florists and garden centers alike. It's huge, globe-like clusters of blooms impart a regal elegance that is uncommon among potted plants. Unlike other flowering plants, however, the flower color of most hydrangeas can be changed from year-to-year, with a little help from their caregiver. Many gardeners, therefore, consider hydrangea to be the chameleon of the plant world.



Hydrangea is a genus in the plant family **Hydrangeaceae**. The genus contains nearly 75 species of shrubs or small trees, most of which are native to the region of Asia now occupied by China, Korea and Japan. The word, hydrangea, is derived from the Greek **hydro** meaning "water" and **angeion** meaning "vessel". Although the name was given to the plant because of the shape of its seed pods, it is fitting in another way. Hydrangea plants have a very high water requirement and should never be allowed to dry out.

Florists' hydrangea (**Hydrangea macrophylla** var. **macrophylla**) has been an important greenhouse crop for decades. It produces flowers in flowerheads that (botanically) are classified as either corymbs or panicles. Individual flowers of florists' hydrangea contain large, showy sepals which surround a center core of smaller, less conspicuous flowers. The color of hydrangea flowers can be controlled by altering the plant's soil environment. Flowers are pink if the plant is growing at a soil pH that is nearly neutral. Blue flowers can be produced by acidifying the soil with aluminum sulfate. It actually is the element aluminum which turns the flowers blue. However, aluminum is more readily available for plant uptake at low pH values, hence the need to keep pH low. The color of white hydrangea flowers cannot be changed.

When grown as a potted plant, as mentioned above, it is essential to keep hydrangea moist at all times. Given adequate amounts of water, potted hydrangeas may be kept attractive indoors for several weeks. If the plants are allowed to dry out, the flowers will collapse quickly, even before the leaves show any sign of wilting. Once flowers become badly wilted, they will never recover.

After potted hydrangeas have finished flowering, one of several choices must be made. The plant may be discarded, kept for reblooming or planted outdoors in the garden. Your choice might depend upon your geographical location as well as your interest in gardening. If you have little or no gardening interest, then enjoy the plant until the flowers wither and then discard it. If you like a challenge, you might want to attempt to rebloom the plant.

To rebloom a hydrangea indoors, cut its shoots back after the plant has finished flowering so that two pairs of leaves are left on each shoot. If necessary, repot using a soilless growing medium containing a high percentage of peat moss. After the danger of frost has past, move the plant outside and sink the pot into the soil where it gets full morning sun but light afternoon shade. Water the plant regularly and fertilize with a complete liquid fertilizer about every two weeks. For extra-large flower heads, allow only about three stems to develop.

When removing extra shoots, take out those that grow toward the center of the plant. Lift the pot occasionally during the summer to keep root growth from moving outside the pot. To keep shoots from becoming too long, pinch them back during the summer. The last pinch should be made no later than July.

Keep the plant outdoors as long as possible in the fall, but bring it indoors before a hard freeze. Allow the plant to retain its leaves until about November 1st. Then, pick off all the leaves by hand or put the plant in total darkness until all leaves drop naturally. The leafless plant must be vernalized (exposed to cool temperatures) in order to induce subsequent flowering. This involves keeping it at temperatures from 35 to 40 degrees F for about six weeks. During this time, the plant can be kept dry since it has no leaves.

After the cooling period, move the plant to a sunny, cool room, with night temperatures of 55 to 60 degrees F. Water it well and fertilize about every two weeks. It should flower in about four months.

Alternatively, if you live in the southern third of Missouri (hardiness zone six) potted hydrangeas can be planted in the garden for years of enjoyment. Wait until the danger of frost has past and make sure to water the plant regularly until it is established in the garden.

In the garden, hydrangea is prized both for its foliage and its flowers. Flower buds form on the plants in the fall; therefore, these buds must survive the winter if they are to flower the following summer. Keep in mind that the flower buds are not as cold hardy as the remainder of the plant. During severe winters protection from the cold might become necessary.

Large baskets or boxes may be inverted over the plants to help protect the tender buds. Alternatively, a wire cylinder filled with a loose mulch can be placed over the plants. Evergreen boughs work well. Loose mulch is important since a dense mulch that retains moisture can promote disease infestation of the flower buds. In milder winters, protection is not necessary.

Other types of hydrangeas are more suitable for outdoor, garden conditions. One of these is 'Hills-of-Snow' hydrangea (**Hydrangea arborescens**). Unlike florists' hydrangea, this plant is able to flower on new growth. Therefore, plants can be pruned more severely and still flower well. Although available only in white, it bears large flower clusters that are very attractive.

'Pee Gee' hydrangea (**Hydrangea paniculata**) is a woody, tree-like hydrangea that produces white flowers in large clusters that are somewhat pyramidal in shape. In mild climates, it may eventually reach a height of 25. Somewhat tender, 'Pee Gee' may suffer from winter damage at our latitude which tends to keep plants smaller.

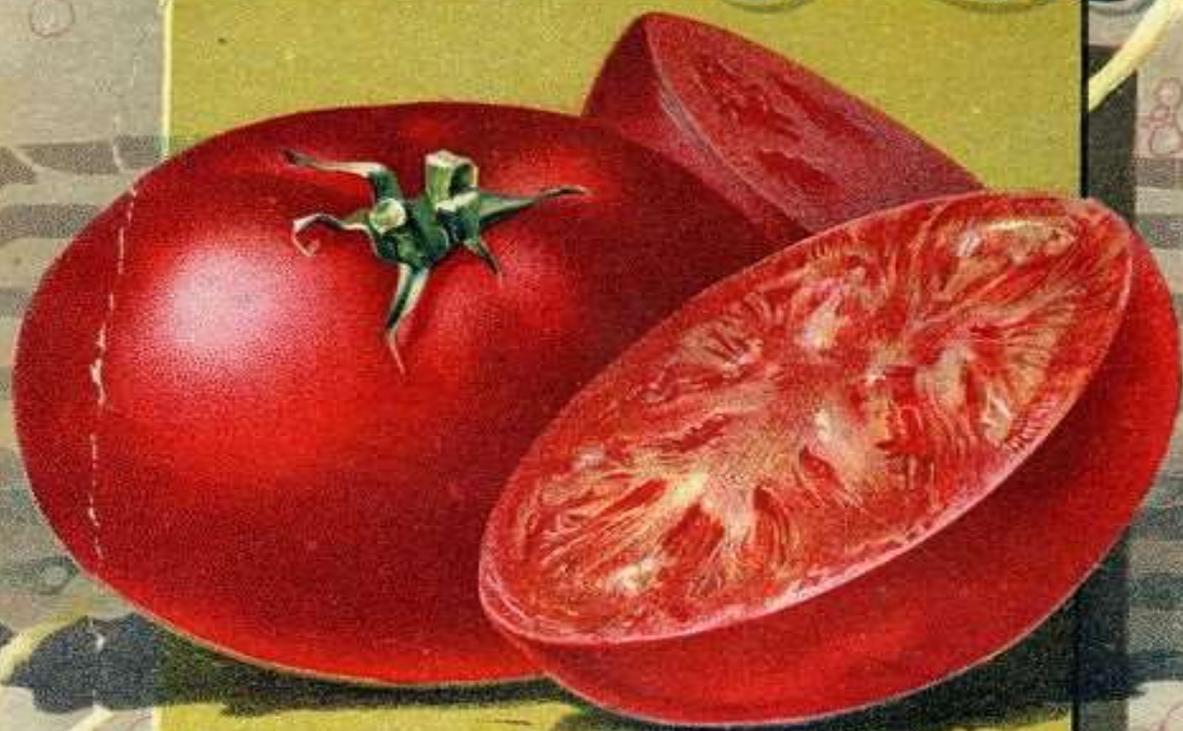
Oak-leaf hydrangea (**Hydrangea quercifolia**) is very attractive and well adapted to our climate. It has large, showy leaves which turn red in the fall. It grows and flowers well in shade and is a good choice for difficult, low-light areas. It produces white flowers in early summer which gradually change color to pinkish-purple. The latter color is maintained until the flowers turn brown in the fall. Oak-leaf hydrangea is a shrub with relative few problems and deserves more attention than it currently receives.

Whatever the species, it must be noted that hydrangea tissue contains [cyanogenic glycosides](#) and is considered moderately toxic. Therefore, hydrangea should be handled with proper care and kept away from children and pets

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Gardening by Month - April

Monthly Tips and Tasks

Category	Week				Activity
	1	2	3	4	
Ornamentals	x	x	x	x	Study your landscape for gaps that could be nicely filled with bulbs. Mark these spots carefully and make a note to order bulbs next August.
	x	x	x	x	Enjoy, but do not disturb the many wildflowers blooming in woodlands throughout Missouri.
	x	x	x	x	When buying bedding plants, choose compact, bushy plants that have not begun to flower.
	x	x	x		When crabapples are in bloom, hardy annuals may be transplanted outdoors.
	x	x	x		Fertilize established roses once new growth is 2 inches long. Use a balanced formulation. Begin spraying to control black spot disease.
	x	x			Examine shrubs for winter injury. Prune all dead and weakened wood.
	x				Groundcovers can be mowed to remove winter burn and tidy plants up. Raise mowers to their highest settings. Fertilize and water to encourage rapid regrowth.
	x				Shrubs and trees best planted or transplanted in spring, rather than fall, include butterfly bush, dogwood, rose of Sharon, black gum (<i>Nyssa</i>), vitex, red bud, magnolia, tulip poplar, birch, ginkgo, hawthorn and most oaks.
	x				Winter mulches should be removed from roses. Complete pruning promptly. Remove only dead wood from climbers at this time. Cultivate lightly, working in some compost or other organic matter.
		x	x	x	Look for flowering dogwoods in bloom.
		x	x	x	Break off rims from peat pots when transplanting seedlings, otherwise they can act as a wick to draw moisture away from the roots.
		x	x		Transplant Virginia bluebells (<i>Mertensia virginica</i>) after bloom, but before the foliage disappears.
			x	x	Do not prune boxwoods before April 15.
			x	x	Evergreen and deciduous hedges may be sheared. Prune the top narrower than the base so sunlight will reach the lower limbs.
			x	x	Oaks and hickories bloom.
			x	x	Easter lilies past blooming can be planted outdoors. Set the bulbs 2 to 3 inches deeper than they grew in the pot. Mulch well if frost occurs.
			x	x	Apply controls for holly leaf miner when the new leaves are just beginning to grow.
			x	x	Balloon flower (<i>Platycodon</i>), hardy hibiscus, gasplant (<i>Dictamnus albus</i>) and some lilies are slow starters in the spring garden. Cultivate carefully to avoid injury to these tardy growers.
			x		Prune spring flowering ornamentals after they finish blooming.
			x		Begin planting out summer bulbs such as caladiums, gladioli and acidanthera at 2 week intervals.

Category	Week				Activity
Lawns	x	x	x	x	Start mowing cool season grasses at recommended heights. For complete details, refer to University Extension Guide #6705, Cool Season Grasses.
	x	x			Topdress low spots and finish overseeding thin or bare patches.
	x	x			Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or if soil is compacted.
	x	x			Apply crabgrass preventers before April 15. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.
Vegetables	x	x	x		Finish transplanting broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower plants into the garden. High phosphorous fertilizers help get transplants off to a quick start.
	x	x			Plants started indoors should be hardened off outdoors in cold frames before being transplanted into the garden.
	x	x			Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash, and watermelon seeds indoors in peat pots.
	x	x			Finish sowing seeds of all cool-season vegetables not yet planted.
	x	x			Plastic films can be used to preheat the soil where warm season vegetables are to be grown.
	x	x			Asparagus and rhubarb harvests begin.
		x	x	x	Handpick and destroy asparagus beetles.
		x	x	x	Keep your hoe sharp! Don't allow weeds to get an early start in your garden.
		x	x	x	Flower stalks should be removed from rhubarb plants, if they develop.
		x	x	x	Try an early sowing of warm-season crops such as green beans, summer squash, sweet corn, New Zealand spinach and cucumbers.
		x	x		Thin out crowded seedlings from early plantings of cool season crops such as beets, carrots, lettuce, onions and radish.
		x	x		Sow seeds of luffa and hard-shell gourds indoors in peat pots. Soak seeds overnight before planting.
		x	x		Make succession sowings of cool-season crops.
			x	x	Begin planting lima beans, cucumbers, melons, okra and watermelons.
			x	x	Begin setting out transplants of tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and sweet potatoes.
Fruits	x	x	x	x	Blemish-free fruits unmarred by insect or disease injury can rarely be produced without relying on regular applications of insecticides and fungicides For special information, consult University Extension Guide Sheet #G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule.
	x	x			Wooden clothespins make useful spreaders for training young fruits limbs. Place pins between the trunk and branch to force limbs outward at a 60 degree angle from the trunk.
	x	x			A white interior latex paint may be brushed on the trunks of newly planted fruit trees to prevent sunburn. This will gradually weather off in time.
	x	x			Stink bugs and tarnished plant bugs become active on peaches.
	x	x			Leaf rollers are active on apple trees. Control as needed.
	x	x			Prune peaches and nectarines now.
	x				Plant bare-root or potted fruit trees as soon as the soil can be worked.

Category	Week			Activity
	x			Remove tree wraps from fruit trees now.
		x	x	Protect bees and other pollinating insects. Do not spray insecticides on fruit trees that are blooming.
		x		Destroy or prune off webs of eastern tent caterpillars. "B.t." (Dipel) is a safe biological spray.
			x	Orange, jelly-like galls on cedar trees spread rust diseases to apples, crabapples and hawthorns.
			x	Begin sprays for fire-blight susceptible apples and pears using an agricultural streptomycin.
			x	Spider mites and codling moths become active on apples.
Miscellaneous	x	x		Termites begin swarming. Termites can be distinguished from ants by their thick waists and straight antennae. Ants have slender waists and elbowed antennae.
	x	x		Look for morel mushrooms when lilacs bloom and the forest floor turns green.
	x			Mount a rain gauge on a post near the garden to keep track of precipitation so you can tell when to water. Most gardens need about 1 inch of rain per week between April and September.
		x	x	Mole young are born in chambers deep underground.
			x	Honeybees are swarming. Notify a local beekeeper to find a new home for these beneficial insects.
			x	Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems help you save water and money.
			x	Hummingbirds return from their winter home in Central America.
			x	Wasp and hornet queens begin nesting.

April Pests and Problems

Apply crabgrass preventer by mid-April or by the time forsythia is blooming. If you decide to use a weed and feed product, do not use a fertilizer high in nitrogen.

Scout for and remove tent caterpillar webs. Treat now to help control lacebugs if they were a problem on azaleas or other plants last year.



Eastern Tent Caterpillar

Eastern tent caterpillar (Lepidoptera) inside their web on crabapple (*Malus*)



Eastern Tent Caterpillar

Close-up of egg mass of eastern tent caterpillar (Lepidoptera) on flowering quince (*Chaenomeles*)

You can whip potatoes, but it's hard to beat beets



COLUMBIA, Mo. – Few vegetables elicit less excitement from the average gardener than beet. Once relegated to pickling or making borscht, beet is enjoying greater respect due to its reported health benefits, said University of Missouri Extension horticulturist David Trinklein.

Beets contain plant pigments called betalains that have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and general detoxification properties in humans. Beet juice is marketed today as a natural energy drink because it contains dietary nitrates. The human body converts these nitrates to nitric oxide, which relaxes and dilates blood vessels. This can boost energy and stamina.

One cup of sliced, cooked beets contains only 75 calories. Beets are high in dietary fiber and are an excellent source of folate and vitamins A and K. They also contain significant amounts of manganese, copper and potassium.

To promote planting of this nutritious vegetable, the National Garden Bureau has declared 2018 the Year of the Beet.

Humans have been eating beets for more than 5,000 years, Trinklein said. Beets originally had long, thin roots, so people harvested only the leaves, which were used as a pot herb.

“It was not until the second or third century A.D. that cooking and eating the beetroots was described in the literature,” he said. Presumably, he added, this referred to a fleshy root and not the long, fibrous root of early beets.

George Washington grew beets at Mount Vernon, and Thomas Jefferson planted them at Monticello. **By the 19th century, seed catalogs featured several varieties of beets. Today’s seed catalogs often list more than a dozen varieties in colors including red, yellow, white and concentric or “candy striped,”** said Trinklein

The earthy taste of beets that makes people either love them or loathe them comes from a compound called geosmin. **It’s the same compound that gives certain fish such as carp an earthy or “muddy” flavor. “The human nose is very sensitive to geosmin and can detect it at the astonishingly low concentration of only 5 parts per trillion,”** Trinklein said.

Whether you want them for their vitamin-rich leaves or earthy-tasting roots, beets are fairly easy to grow. Beet is a cool-season crop that prefers full sun and well-drained soil. It tolerates average to low fertility quite well. In fact, too much nitrogen encourages top growth at the expense of root development. Beets are frost-tolerant and should be planted early in spring so their primary growth occurs during cooler weather, Trinklein said. After establishing a good seedbed, plant seeds 3/4 inch deep and 1 inch apart in rows separated by 12 to 18 inches. **Each beet “seed” actually is an entire**

ripened ovary that contains several seeds, so gardeners should thin beets after they emerge from the soil to reduce competition.

Harvest beets as soon as they are an inch or more in diameter. The best flavor and root color develop under **bright light along with cooler weather, so "new" beets usually are more flavorful than those** grown to full maturity. Beets that mature during warm weather have less sugar and poorer color, Trinklein said.

Like most root crops, beets store well. Remove the tops and store only roots free of disease and injury. Beets can be stored for up to six months at temperatures just above freezing and relative humidity of 95 to 100 percent.

In addition to the familiar garden beet, other cultivars include chard, which is harvested for its nutritious leaves, and sugar beet, a sucrose-rich plant that is the source of about 20 percent of the **world's sugar production.**

Writer: Linda Geist

Interesting and very thoughtful message for all to read. This is special

READ ALL THE WAY THROUGH AND SEE HOW YOU FEEL Gardening at its best!

=====

A successful businessman was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business.

Instead of choosing one of his Directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together.

He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you" The young executives were shocked, but the boss continued. "I am going to give each one of you a SEED today - one very special SEED.

I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO."

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly, told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Every day, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew.

Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing.

By now, others were talking about their plants, but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure.

Six months went by -- still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Jim didn't say anything to his colleagues, however, he just kept watering and fertilizing the soil - He so wanted the seed to grow.

A year finally went by and all the young executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection.

Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life, but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room.

When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful - in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives.

Jim just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the CEO. "Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!"

All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered the Financial Director to bring him to the front. Jim was terrified.. He thought, "The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!"

When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed, Jim told him the story.

The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, "Behold your next Chief Executive Officer!"

His name is "Jim!" Jim couldn't believe it. Jim couldn't even grow his seed.

"How could he be the new CEO?" the others said.

Then the CEO said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead - it was not possible for them to grow. All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!"

- * If you plant honesty, you will reap trust
- * If you plant goodness, you will reap friends
- * If you plant humility, you will reap greatness
- * If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment
- * If you plant consideration, you will reap perspective
- * If you plant hard work, you will reap success
- * If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation

So, be careful what you plant now; it will determine what you will reap later..
Think about this for a minute.

If I happened to show up on your door step crying, would you care?

If I called you and asked you to pick me up

FREE Gardening Workshop Thurs. March 29th

Laclede County Master Gardeners will host a free public workshop titled "Annual Floral and Vegetable Production" on Thursday evening **March 29th** in the MU Extension office meeting room. Kathryn Kufahl from Master Gardeners of the Ozarks will share her experiences and training in the selection of floral and gardening plants and varieties for you to grow. She will also address how to lay out your garden for maximum performance. Mrs. Kufahl will include a question and answer session for participants. For more information and to register for this 6:00 p.m. class please contact Sam or Jonetta at the MU Extension office in Lebanon at [417-532-7126](tel:417-532-7126) or shaverj@missouri.edu. This workshop is open to everyone.

Sign-Up Underway for Marshfield/Webster Spring Gardening Classes

Both beginning and experienced gardeners are invited to attend a 6-session series of gardening classes scheduled for April and May 2018. All classes will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Webster County Extension Center on South Highway A (next to City Hall), in Marshfield, and will include both classroom and field experiences. Patrick Byers, MU Extension horticulture specialist, will be the instructor.

Session #1 will be Wednesday, April 18, and will cover composting and soils, including soil requirements for various plants and benefits of mulching and cover crops.

Session #2 will be Monday, April 23, and will cover raised beds and other garden structures to make gardening successful and easier on your body.

Session #3 will be Wednesday, April 25, and will cover vegetable gardening, including soil preparation, crop timing, plant water needs and pest control.

Session #4 will be Monday, April 30, and will cover growing flowers and ornamentals, including what annuals and perennials grow best in the Ozarks and how to care for them.

Session #5 will be Wednesday, May 2, and will cover insects and diseases, including tips on diagnosis and least-toxic methods of pest control.

Session #6 will be Friday, May 4, and will cover tree and shrubs, including selection, fertilizing, pruning, watering, and pest control.

"This class series will provide a great opportunity for gardening enthusiasts to share information, problems and solutions with other growers. Participants can sign up for one, multiple or all sessions based on their interests," said Bob Schultheis, natural resource engineering specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

The fee for each two-hour class is \$10 per person per session, \$15 per couple per session, or all six sessions for \$50. Pre-registration and payment is required one week in advance of the first session attended, to assure adequate resource materials are available.

The program is sponsored by University of Missouri Extension, the Webster County Extension Council, and the Marshfield Area Community Foundation. For more information or to register for one or more of the gardening classes, contact the Webster County Extension Center at [417-859-2044](tel:417-859-2044), send an email to websterco@missouri.edu to reserve a seat; or go online to <http://extension.missouri.edu/webster> get the pre-registration form and class schedule.

Recycling Wood Ashes



Cold winter nights make the warmth of a crackling fireplace or a cozy wood stove particularly pleasant. However, after the fire subsides the task of disposing of the ashes may be a problem. For gardeners, wood ashes spread on garden soils are an excellent and free source of calcium and other essential plant nutrients, if not overdone. An understanding of the action of wood ashes on soil will help to determine when to stop.

Ashes represent the organic and inorganic remains after the combustion of wood. For centuries they have been used for various purposes. Most gardeners are familiar with the term potash when used to describe nutrient forms of the element potassium. The term comes from an early production procedure where potassium was leached from wood ashes and concentrated by evaporating the leachate in large iron kettles or pots. As early settlers cleared land for agriculture and burned the wood, potash sales became an important source of income.

Wood ashes contain other minerals in addition to potassium. Their composition varies due mainly to the species of wood burned. As a rule, hardwood species produce three times more ashes and five times more nutrients than softwood species. Additionally, wood ashes contain few if any elements that represent environmental hazards.

Since carbon, nitrogen and sulfur are the elements primarily oxidized in the combustion process, wood ashes contain most of the other essential elements required for the growth of the tree used as fuel. As an average, wood ashes contain (by weight) 1.5 to 2 percent

phosphorous and 5 to 7 percent potassium. If listed as a fertilizer, most wood ashes would have the analysis of 0-1-3 (N-P-K). Not implied in the preceding is the fact that the calcium content of wood ashes ranges from 25 to 50 percent.

The calcium in wood ashes is in the oxide form. When wood ashes are placed outdoors and weathered, the calcium oxide changes to calcium hydroxide, and finally to calcium carbonate. Therefore, because of their high calcium content, it's probably best to think of wood ashes as a liming material to adjust soil pH rather than a regular fertilizer to supply a wide array of nutrients.

The ideal pH range for most garden plants is about 6.0 to 6.5. When soil pH readings fall below this range, certain essential mineral elements become less available to the plant. Since garden soils tend to become more acid as plants take up nutrients, periodic pH adjustment to decrease soil acidity (increase pH readings) is necessary.

Most wood ashes have an acid neutralizing equivalent of about 45 to 50 percent of calcium carbonate (limestone). In other words, it takes about twice the weight of wood ashes compared with limestone to cause the same change in soil acidity. For example, if soil test results indicate your soil needs five pounds of limestone per 100 square feet of garden area to raise the soil pH to an acceptable level, it would require 10 pounds of wood ashes to make the same change.

If small amounts of wood ashes are applied to the garden on a yearly basis to supply other nutrients such as phosphorus and potassium, a soil test every two to three years is recommended. Excessive application of wood ashes can lead to a buildup of pH above the optimum range. This can result in other nutritional problems because of reduced nutrient availability at high pH values.

What constitutes a reasonable application of wood ashes? Five to ten pounds per 100 square feet of garden soil is considered average. If applied as a pre-plant it is best to thoroughly incorporate this amount into the soil three to four weeks in advance of planting. Alternatively, wood ashes can be used as a sidedressing around growing plants. Keep in mind, however, that they are not a rich source of any of the major essential mineral elements other than calcium.

Excess wood ashes not applied to the garden immediately should be stored under dry conditions. Ashes piled outdoors lose most of their potassium content in a year's time due to leaching from rains. Additionally, weathered wood ashes' ability to act as a liming agent also is greatly reduced.

Even though they do contain some carbon, because of the fine nature of wood ashes, they have little effect on soil structure. Therefore, they are not considered to be a soil conditioning agent. The carbon compounds that act as a soil conditioner when sawdust, leaf mold or compost are applied to garden soil, for the most part, have been consumed by the fire that created the ashes.

Wood ashes are highly alkaline. As a safety precaution, wear protective glasses, gloves and a dust mask when spreading them on the garden. Additionally, ashes that result from burning cardboard, trash, coal or treated wood of any type should not be used on the garden, since they may contain potentially harmful materials.

New Plants for 2018

The latest and greatest in the garden world have arrived. BY DEB WILEY



This is the pepper plan that Master Gardener Clyde Majerus gave us seeds to last year – It is the number one plant featured for this year in “Bird & Bloom magazine” this month. I have some seed from my plant and will be glad to share – just let me know. It is a beautiful plant even if you don’t use the peppers

MAJOR IMPACT

With black foliage and red fruits, Onyx Red stands out. One All-America Selections judge said it offers “real WOW power in the landscape.”

This Month's Recipe

Tomato Bread Pudding

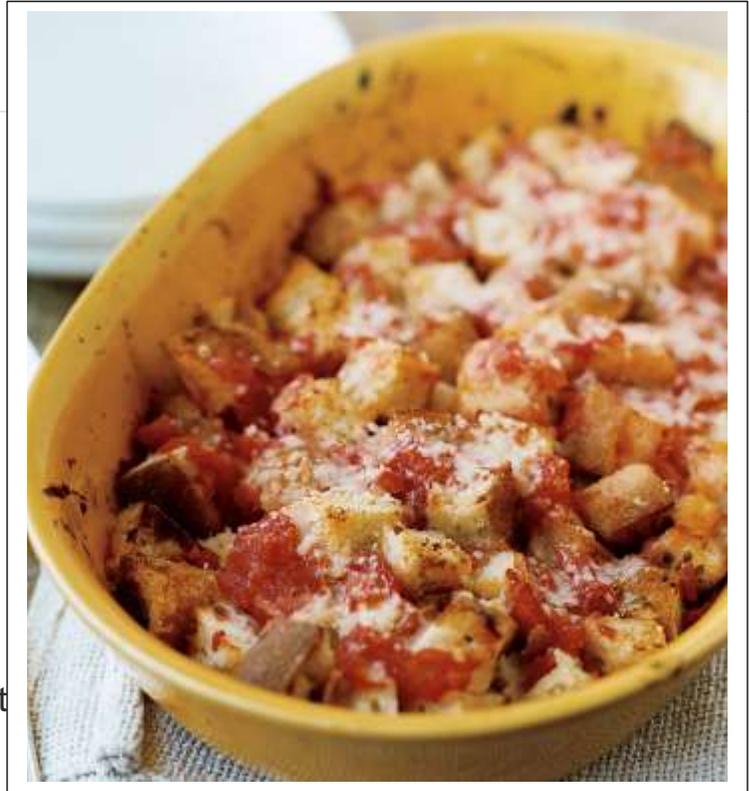
BROWED FROM RACHAEL RAY EVERY DAY

40min **COOK TIME**

25min **PREP TIME**

Ingredients

- 5 tomatoes (about 2 pounds total) peeled,
- halved, cored and seeded
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- Pepper
- 1/2 baguette, cut into 3/4-inch cubes (about 4 cups)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese



Preparation

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 400 degrees . Grease a 1 1/2-quart shallow casserole dish. Using a food processor, pulse the tomato halves, salt, sugar and a pinch of pepper until coarsely pureed.

Place the bread cubes in the prepared dish and pour in the melted butter to coat. Top with the tomato puree and gently mix to distribute.

Bake until crusty and golden brown, about 30 minutes. Sprinkle the cheese on top and bake for 10 minutes more. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving. – Serves 4.

MFA Work Schedule

Our MFA 4-Week Schedule

Please be on time and get everything set up and ready to answer questions, assist with plant ideas and other gardening suggestions. Also take the opportunity to promote our Master Gardening program – it is a great opportunity to sign up folks for our next class. Make sure and return all set up materials to the extension office for the next group the following week-end. Thanks and it is still not too late to sign up to help.

Saturday	9 am til 11	11 til 1
April 21	Barb T & Ronna	Ronna (help needed please)
April 28	Donna B & Peggy G	Ronna (again help please)
May 5	Bob S & Glennie	Bob S & Marvin & Jeann
May 12	Bob S & Don M	Bob S & Ronna

Thanks to those that have signed up but more of our members to help and fill in.

Addition items that may be needed – scissors, duck tape, weights to hold down material in case of wind.

You may not sell any personal plants or items of the gardening natures,

You will want to support MFA at all times

There is an election going on so we will not be able to politick or promote any cause or candidate

Lets all have fun and remember as we help our community to grow so will we grow!

Can You Pronounce The MO Towns?



Missouri. Missuruh. Mizurah. Standard pronunciation is hard to come by in the Show-Me State.

But that's nothing compared to cities and towns in Missouri that use faux French, hick or just plain made-up pronunciations.

If you've ever been laughed at by someone for referring to Nevada, Versailles or Spokane, Missouri, using the pronunciations from their homographic sister cities, this list is for you:

1. **Nevada** - It's "Ne-VAY-dah." This is not Las Vegas.
2. **Versailles** - "Ver-SAIL-s." Ain't no castles here, so none of that French L-dropping.



3. **Hayti** - "Hay-Tie." Don't get mixed up with the island nation of Haiti.
4. **Kimbrough** - "Kim-brew," not Kim-bor-oh.

5. **Bolivar** - "Ball-i-ver."

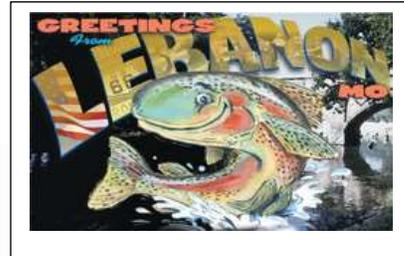
6. **Spokane** - In Washington State, it's Spo-can. Here in Missouri, it's "Spoe-kane."

7. **Kearney** - "Carney," like someone who works at a carnival.

8. **Pomme de Terre**

The Pomme de Terre is a river, not a city, but its pronunciation is still bonkers. It's "puhm duh TAHR," which sounds little like the French word for potato, "POHM de tehr."

lebanonmissouri.org



9. **Lebanon**

This isn't the Middle East. Over here, it's "lebu-nun."

10. **Haseltine** - The real old timers call it "hazel-teen."

11. **Nixa** - It's pronounced with a short "i" like it's spelled, but the locals call it "Nixie."

12. **Auxvasse** - "Of auze," not Ox-Vahsey. Tip: When pronouncing, pretend you're saying the last two words in the movie title *The Wizard of Oz*.

13. **Cabool** - It rhymes with pool.

14. **Bois D'Arc** - A late addition! We forgot about this one. It's "Bo Dark." No S.

15. **Bona** - It's "Bah-nuh," though the locals call this teeny town "Bah-nee."

16. **New Madrid** - "New MAH-drid." Thanks to the kind lady at New Madrid City Hall who corrected our "MAYdrid" pronunciation.

17. **Laquey** - It's pronounced Lake Way.

18. **Clever** - It's clever, like a fox, not cleaver, like for a butcher.

19. **Milan** - It's "MY-luhn," not the Italian fashion hub. A reader suggests pronouncing it like you're saying "mile and a half," but stop at the "d."

20. **Canalou** - Wrong: "CAN-a-lou." Right: "ca-now-lou."

What did we miss? Any other pronunciations got you confused? It doesn't have to be a city. Don't even get us started on Gravois...

HAVE FUN!