WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE LAWN & GARDEN

VEGETABLES
If you didn’t plant cool-season vegetables in March, now is the time to do it. If you wait much longer you may not have a productive crop, as they do not like warm weather. Direct seed cool-season vegetables like lettuce, spinach, kale, collards, Swiss chard, radishes and carrots. Plant onions, peas and potatoes, but wait until May to plant sweet potatoes, which prefer warmer weather. Asparagus, rhubarb and strawberry plants can be planted now. These are perennials, so be sure to plant them in an area where they will remain undisturbed for many years.

WOODY ORNAMENTALS
Spring is a good time to plant trees and shrubs, and there is a better selection at garden centers and nurseries in the spring. Trees and shrubs can also be planted in the fall.

When selecting a tree or shrub, know how big it will get at maturity. It is important to put the right plant in the right place. Know the diseases and disorders it is susceptible to and know the preferred site conditions. A tree such as a Japanese Maple or a Flowering Dogwood should not be planted in an exposed location in the middle of the yard. Both of these trees can suffer leaf scorch if they do not receive some protection from the sun. Look for a tree with a strong trunk and well-spaced limbs.

Before planting a tree, remove all tags, wire or string, as these can cause girdling if left on and cause plant death. Mulch trees after planting to hold in moisture and prevent weed growth. Try to have trees planted before it gets hot. Planting a tree on a 95 degree day in July is not ideal, and often the tree dies.

FLOWERS
This time of the year spring bulb flowers such as tulips, daffodils, crocus and hyacinth make their appearance. After a long, cold winter these flowers are a welcoming site. When they are finished blooming, wait until their foliage turns yellow to brown and dies back before cutting it off. They need these leaves to build energy reserves in their bulbs for next season’s blooms.

Gardeners, including myself, get anxious this time of the year to start planting flowers. Flowers that are cold-tolerant and good choices for early season color include pansies, snapdragons, dianthus and flowering kale.

LAWN CARE
Rake up leaves from your lawn, or mow and mulch them. Spring is not the best time to establish a cool-season lawn, but small, bare areas can be seeded. Do not seed a lawn if applying crabgrass preventer. It cannot distinguish between lawn grass seed and crabgrass seed, and will kill all seed in the lawn. It is important to apply crabgrass preventer to lawns before April 15. Crabgrass will begin to germinate when the soil temperature reaches 60 degrees. Check your mower blades before your first mowing and have them sharpened if needed.
FARMERS’ MARKET MEETING TO BE HELD IN BROOKFIELD

A Farmers’ Market meeting and program will be held Thursday, April 8 from 1-3 pm at Burris Community Center, #1 Center Drive in Brookfield. The workshop is open to anyone interested in selling at the Brookfield Farmers’ Market.

Topics covered include: customer service tips, pricing and marketing products, labeling products, and Q & A.

The free meeting and program is sponsored by Winigan Farms. For more information call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or contact Winigan Farms through Facebook. Pre-registration is not required.

MASTER GARDENER COURSE BEGINS IN AUGUST FOR MID-MO AND KIRKSVILLE AREA

The MU Extension Master Gardener training course will be held August 25-November 10. It will be offered as a hybrid course, which means it will be a combination of Zoom and in-person classes.

You must attend both the Zoom presentations and the lab classes. Zoom presentations will be held on Wednesdays from 9-11:30 am. In-person, outdoor lab classes will be held on Thursdays in Kirksville from 9:30-11:30, and from 9-11:30 on Fridays in Columbia/ Jefferson City. Participants will choose one site for their lab classes. Lab classes include garden tours, plant ID & culture, discussions and much more. There will be a reading assignment each week, and an open book final exam at the end of the course.

The cost for this MU Extension course is $200 and includes all course materials and one soil test. Registration will open in June.

MASTER POLLINATOR STEWARD COURSE BEGINS MAY 19 IN KIRKSVILLE

The MU Extension Master Pollinator Steward Course will be held May 19-June 24 in Kirksville. There will be six, two-hour presentations by Zoom. Participants can participate in the comfort of their own home, the Adair County Extension Center, or the closest county Extension Center. There will be six, in-person lab classes held in Kirksville. You must attend both the Zoom presentations and the lab classes. Zoom presentations will be held on Wednesdays from 10 am until noon. In-person, outdoor lab classes will be held on Thursdays from 2-4 pm when the insects are most active. The rain dates are Fridays from 10-noon.

Lab classes will include garden tours to identify flowers, flower shapes, insects on flowers, net sweeping of insects; honeybee hive identification and discussion and honey sampling; solitary bee identification and building of solitary bee houses; a prairie tour, and a native tree walk.

There will be a reading assignment with questions to answer each week, and there will be an open book final exam at the end of the course. Everyone completing the course will receive a certificate. The objectives for the course are for participants to have a better understanding of plants, pollinators and citizen science projects, and to install native plant gardens, plant more natives, and increase pollinator numbers, whether this be on in your home landscape, on your farm or in a public area.

The cost for this MU Extension course is $100 and includes all course materials. Register at https://extension.missouri.edu/events/missouri-master-pollinator-steward-1616599426.

MU EXTENSION OFFERS FREE EVENT ON GROWING HOME GARDEN TOMATOES

University of Missouri Extension will offer a free program on Growing Home Garden Tomatoes, on Wednesday, April 14. The program will be held from 6-8 pm and is via Zoom.

MU Extension Field Specialist in Horticulture, Jennifer Schutter, will present on tomato genealogy, tomato varieties, planting, harvesting, physiological disorders, diseases and insects. MU Extension Field Specialist in Agronomy, Dhruba Dhakal, will present on soil sampling and testing, soil preparation, fertilizer application and water management. Dhakal will also highlight the importance of organic matter and ways to improve organic matter in garden soil.

Pre-registration is required. Register online for the event at: https://extension.missouri.edu/events/growing-home-garden-tomatoes. Participants will need to provide an email address. Once registered, the participant will receive a zoom link through email to attend the virtual program. Contact Dhruba Dhakal at dhakald@missouri.edu or 573-581-3231 with questions about this program.
SPRING IS A GREAT TIME TO TRY WILD EDIBLES

Want to try wild edibles? Spring is here and they are popping up all over. Growing up in the Ozarks, I was introduced to wild edibles at a young age. My family mainly picked and ate pokeweed, lambsquarter, morel mushrooms, persimmons and wild blackberries. It was always fun going out in the woods on our Ozarks farm with my dad looking for mushrooms. He always said mushrooms will be found near ash trees, so we would walk around in the woods and areas where he knew there were ash trees. Unfortunately, Emerald Ash Borer has killed many ash trees, including the ones on my parent’s farm.

I really like lambsquarter, and if I can find a lot of it, I blanch and freeze it. It makes a great spinach substitute. I also freeze persimmon pulp. Since my childhood, I’ve tried other wild edibles like wild grapes, elderberries, black walnuts, cattails, dandelion flowers and greens, chickweed and wild raspberries.

When picking wild edibles for food, there are some things to consider. Plants growing near homes and occupied buildings or along roadsides may have been sprayed with pesticides. Wash them thoroughly. Avoid roadside plants, if possible, due to contamination from exhaust emissions. Do not pick plants growing in contaminated water. Some plants develop extremely dangerous fungal toxins. To lessen the chance of accidental poisoning, do not eat any fruit that is starting to spoil or showing signs of mildew or fungus. Plants of the same species may differ in their toxic or subtoxic compounds content because of genetic or environmental factors. One example of this is the foliage of the common chokecherry. Some chokecherry plants have high concentrations of deadly cyanide compounds while others have low concentrations or none. Livestock has died from eating wilted wild cherry leaves. Avoid any weed, leaves, or seeds with an almond-like scent, a characteristic of the cyanide compounds.

Some people are more susceptible to gastric distress from plants than others. If you are sensitive in this way, avoid unknown wild plants. If you are extremely sensitive to poison ivy, avoid products from this family, including any parts from sumacs, mangoes, and cashews.

Some edible wild plants, such as acorns and water lily rhizomes, are bitter. These bitter substances, usually tannin compounds, make them unpalatable. Boiling them in several changes of water will usually remove these bitter properties. Many valuable wild plants have high concentrations of oxalate compounds, also known as oxalic acid. Oxalates produce a sharp burning sensation in your mouth and throat and damage the kidneys. Baking, roasting, or drying usually destroys these oxalate crystals. The corm (bulb) of the jack-in-the-pulpit is known as the "Indian turnip," but you can eat it only after removing these crystals by slow baking or by drying.

To avoid potentially poisonous plants, stay away from any wild or unknown plants that have: milky or discolored sap; beans, bulbs, or seeds inside pods, bitter or soapy taste; spines, fine hairs, or thorns; dill, carrot, parsnip, or parsleylike foliage; "Almond" scent in woody parts and leaves; grain heads with pink, purplish, or black spurs; three-leaved growth pattern.

The Missouri Department of Conservation has good book on “Wild Edibles of Missouri”. This book as pictures and descriptions of wild edible plants and list the uses of the plant. Recipes for some plants are also included.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April-October: Horticulture Town Halls resume weekly-12-1 pm. Taught by state and regional specialists. A great opportunity to ask your gardening questions. Register at https://ipm.missouri.edu/TownHalls/

April 14: Growing Home Garden Tomatoes: 6 pm via Zoom. See article on page 2 for more info.

May 19-June 25: Master Pollinator Steward hybrid course: See article on page 2 for more information.

May 24: Garden n’ Grow begins in Kirksville. Mondays and Thursdays, 9-11 am. For children ages 8-13. For more information contact schutterjl@missouri.edu or call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866.

August 25-November 10: Master Gardener hybrid course; for more information contact schutterjl@missouri.edu or call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866.

Check out the MU IPM YouTube channel for educational videos on timely gardening topics, and answers to some of your questions. https://www.youtube.com/user/MUIPM/videos
**APRIL GARDENING TIPS**

**Ornamentals**
- 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.
- When buying bedding plants, choose compact, bushy plants that have not begun to flower.
- When crabapples are in bloom, hardy annuals may be transplanted outdoors.
- Remove winter mulches from roses and prune. Remove only dead wood from climbers at this time. Cultivate lightly, working in some compost or other organic matter. Fertilize established roses once new growth is 2 inches long. Use a balanced formulation. Begin spraying to control black spot disease.
- Examine shrubs for winter injury. Prune all dead and weakened wood.
- 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.
- Shrubbs and trees best planted or transplanted in spring include butterfly bush, dogwood, rose of Sharon, black gum (Nyssa), vitex, red bud, magnolia, tulip poplar, birch, ginkgo, hawthorn and most oaks.
- Break off rims from peat pots when transplanting seedlings, otherwise they can act as a wick to draw moisture away from the roots.
- Transplant Virginia bluebells (Mertensia virginica) after bloom, but before the foliage disappears.
- Do not prune boxwoods before April 15.
- Evergreen and deciduous hedges may be sheared. Prune the top narrower than the base so sunlight will reach the lower limbs.
- 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.
- Apply controls for holly leaf miner when new leaves are just beginning to grow.
- Balloon flower (Platycodon), hardy hibiscus, gasplant (Dictamnus albus) and some lilies are slow starters in the spring garden. Cultivate carefully to avoid injury to these tardy growers.
- Prune spring flowering ornamentals after blooming.
- Begin planting summer bulbs such as caladiums, gladioli and acidanthera at 2 week intervals.

**Lawns**
- Mow cool season grasses at recommended heights. Refer to [Extension Guide 6705, Cool Season Grasses](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/guides/6705).
- Topdress low spots and finish overseeding thin or bare patches.
- Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or if soil is compacted.
- Apply crabgrass preventers before April 15. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.

**Vegetables**
- Finish transplanting broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower plants into the garden. High phosphorous fertilizers help get transplants off to a quick start.
- Harden off plants started indoors in cold frames outdoors before transplanted into the garden.
- Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash, and watermelon seeds indoors in peat pots.
- Plastic films can be used to preheat the soil where warm season vegetables are to be grown.
- Asparagus and rhubarb harvests begin.
- Handpick and destroy asparagus beetles.
- Keep your hoe sharp! Don’t allow weeds to get an early start in your garden.
- Remove flower stalks from rhubarb plants.
- Try an early sowing of warm-season crops such as green beans, summer squash, sweet corn, New Zealand spinach and cucumbers.
- Thin out crowded seedlings from early plantings of cool season crops such as beets, carrots, lettuce, onions and radish.
- Sow seeds of luffa and hard-shell gourds indoors in peat pots. Soak seeds overnight before planting.
- Make succession sowings of cool-season crops.
- Begin planting lima beans, cucumbers, melons, okra and watermelons.
- Begin setting out transplants of tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and sweet potatoes.

**Fruits**
- Blemish-free fruits unmarred by insect or disease injury can rarely be produced without relying on regular applications of insecticides and fungicides. Consult [MU Guide G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/7292).
- 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.