

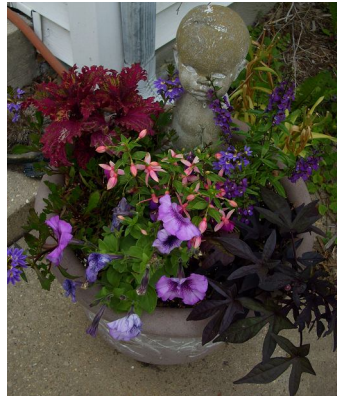
June 2011

# Patty's Plants

## June Newsletter Summertime Annual Plant Maintenance

### Keep Your Annual Flowers Looking Fresh

This has certainly been an interesting beginning to our summer. One day we have 70 degree weather and the next day it's 90. With that drastic change in temperature not only are our flowers confused but we are too as far as caring for them. I always like to get in a pattern when I care for my containers, hanging baskets and gardens. With the weather temperature changing every other day, it's not making it very easy for me to do. In this newsletter I will write the most asked questions about caring for your annual flowers. Should you water everyday? How much do you fertilize?



Why do my flowers leaves look so yellow? Do I need to prune them?

These are all good questions which I will try to answer with my own experiences. Believe it or not even I can have trouble with caring for my flowers. Especially with the fluctuating temperatures, not to mention the wind! Hope these tips make things a bit easier.

*Happy Gardening*

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**Congratulations to The WINNER of our Re-Grand Opening Gift Basket**

**Donna Reay**

Thank you all for participating

Watering

Flowering Hanging Baskets & Containers

- Check Daily, sometimes twice a day in high heat.
- Flowers in the sun and wind will need more watering than shade flowers or plants in protected areas.
- Water thoroughly, let the water run out the bottom but don't let it sit in water more than ten minutes.

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### Should I Water My Flowers Daily?

Water your plants regularly. The morning is the best time. They will be under less stress when the hottest part of the day arrives. Some plants droop during the hottest time of the day even though they have enough moisture, so it is very important to check them first before you go to water them. You don't want to over water them. If it's a container you can lift, like a hanging basket see how heavy it is. It

probably won't need it if it's too heavy to lift. If it's more than you can lift, stick a chopstick down in the container if it comes up wet with soil on it (like an oil dipstick or cake tester) it's not time to water. Also remember rain doesn't always come straight down so don't think that your plants have been watered thoroughly after a rainstorm.

## How Much Should I Fertilize My Flowers?

Fertilize your flowers weekly, at least once a week especially if you are watering once or twice a day. Chemical fertilizers will leach out quickly when your plant has had enough. Organic fertilizer will work with the root system of the plants and use it slowly when needed. Use a good organic liquid fertilizer for your container gardens and hanging baskets. I like Tiger Bloom and Big Bloom both a Foxfarm product. The best part is that it is organic and it doesn't smell!



For your flower gardens "Peace of Mind Fruit and Flower" would be my choice to sprinkle on. It is a slow release organic fertilizer. There are many fertilizers out there. If your soil isn't feeding your plants then adding fertilizer will help whether it is organic or not. Although you know I prefer organic. Using a nutritious soil mix will help too. Happy Frog potting soil is my favorite.

## Why Are Nutrients Important?

### What are Micronutrients and Macronutrients?

Macronutrients and micronutrients are essential for healthy plant growth. There are 16 proven elements found in plants.

\*The macronutrients are nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulfur. NPK or nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are the primary nutrients. They are always listed first in fertilizers because plants use very large amounts of them. They are also used up the fastest in your soil. That's why we need to amend our soil with fertilizers or by adding organic materials to it. Calcium, magnesium and sulfur are called the secondary nutrients. They aren't used as fast so they stay with the plant or in the soil longer. All 6 of these nutrients are the leaf or root cells of a plant.

\*Micronutrients are essential for the plants growth. They are only needed in small amounts. That's why they are called the "minor elements". The 7 micronutrients are boron, chlorine, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum and zinc. Micronutrients add more mineral content to the plants.

There are also 3 non-mineral nutrients. They are hydrogen, oxygen and carbon. They are found in the process called photosynthesis. They turn into starches and sugars which are the plants food. These are made from when the plants use the energy from

the sun. Just like us plants need more than food and water to be healthy, they also need minerals and vitamins to survive.

That's why a good balance of the 16 elements are so important. We can purchase fertilizers with most of these elements in them, just read the labels.

If you want to make your own organic compost use these materials for a great balance of nutrients.

\*Garden refuse, green leaves/weeds, fruit/vegetable trimmings, manures, and grass clippings are all green nitrogen-rich materials.

\*Sawdust/straw, chopped pruning, shredded paper, shredded cardboard, paper towels/tissues, pine needles, dry leaves/weeds, coffee grounds/teabags are all carbon rich material.

If you would like to find out exactly what your soil has in it, do a soil test. There are soil test kits available on-line or at your local garden shops. You can also contact your local county extension office and they can tell you how to take a soil sample and send it in to be tested.

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## Should I Prune My Flowers and How?

Most flowers whether they are annuals or perennials need some type of clean up. **Deadheading**, is a removal of spent flowers and stems. This will keep them looking fresh and they will bloom longer during the season. When deadheading flowers, always trim the flowers along with it's stem back to the main branch. If your plants have gotten so long that it starts to lose it's top, prune

off the bottom anywhere from 3-6" or more. Some plants can take over a planter, in this case prune some of it by thinning it out.



## Can I Mulch?

**Mulch** –Mulching around your plants keeps the roots cool and conserves moisture, so you won't have to water as much. You can use long fibered moss on top of your containers or hang-

ing baskets to hold moisture in. Bark, wood chips or compost works well in the flower garden.

## What If I Need To Spray For Diseases & Insects?

Sometimes your flowers can develop diseases which can be caused and spread by insects. If you need to spray make sure you know what disease or insect you may be treating for. Apply sprays early in the morning or at dusk, never in the hot sun. This can



cause leaf and root burn when you apply it in hot weather. You also want to make sure all the beneficial insects (bees & butterflies) either haven't woken up or have gone to bed.

Hope some of these tips will help you have a stress-free gardening season!



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