

## April Newsletter



### Planting the Spring Garden

April is here, finally! It has been a very long, long cold snowy winter here. The snow has melted, I was beginning to think it never would.. As we go out to our gardens to inspect what mother nature has left us with, we hope that she has been kind. Here in southern Wisconsin, we had record breaking snowfalls. About 80 or so inches all together this winter where I live. The snow was a good insulator and natural mulch for me. Since I never got around to completely mulching everything I was grateful for the protection. So far everything is coming up nicely. In this newsletter I will talk about bringing your summer bulbs and your geraniums out of storage. Getting them on their way to an-

other season out in the garden for your enjoyment once again. I will also tell you how to get your houseplants ready to have a much needed vacation outside this summer. You will also learn what flowers and bulbs to plant early to make your garden even more showy this season. I'll share with you what hummingbird favorites I have out in my garden. Plus the flowers you can use for early spring containers. Learning tomatoes diseases and how to try to prevent them before they start will also be covered.. Happy Spring!



April Showers Brings  
May Flowers

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### Bringing Your Bulbs Out of Storage

If you stored cannas, dahlias, caladiums, callas, and tuberous begonias this winter, you need to get them out now from storage. Starting them indoors will give you extra growing time which means you'll have blooms earlier in the garden. First check all the bulbs, tubers and corms to make sure they aren't moldy, mushy or hard as a rock. If this is the case there is always next year. Sorry to say you'll have to buy new ones this year. You can use flats if you have a lot of bulbs or plant them right in the containers you plan on using. You will have to

have a warm sunny location for them to get started. If you don't have a warm sunny spot you will have to put them under lights. Fill flats and/or pots with a well-drained potting mix. Add some worm casting to the soil for a natural nutrient once the bulbs start growing. Keep the mix moist and warm until growth begins. Water often enough to keep the mix moist but not wet. They will have to be acclimated when you put them outside. Read more about acclimating plants in: "Giving your Houseplants a Summer Vacation."

Coming May 5th

to 220 S. Janesville St.

Milton, WI.

*"Patty's Plants"*

*Natural and Organic*

*Garden Supply*

- I will also be carrying organic herbs, veggies and flowering plants as well as container gardens and hanging baskets. E-mail me at: [patty@pattysplants.com](mailto:patty@pattysplants.com)

## Get Those Geraniums Growing Again

Depending on how you stored your geraniums, they may look a bit scary. If you stored them without any soil on their roots and hung them upside down, they could look like something the cat dragged in. Especially if you didn't check on them and give them a little spritz throughout the winter. If you still see some green growth on them no matter how you stored them, this is the time to replant them. Use fresh quality potting mix with worm castings added to it. This will get your plants off to a good start and stay in the soil when your plants need a boost later. Once they are potted, cut the stems back to 4 to 6 inches above the soil. Move the potted plants to a warm sunny location inside. Water thoroughly and often enough to keep the soil slightly moist. Fertil-



Don't rush to put your geraniums outside this spring, they like it warm, really warm!

ize with a diluted solution of plant fertilizer once new growth appears. Keep the first flower buds pinched off so the plant can get some nice healthy leaves first.

Once again they will have to be acclimated to the weather before they stay outside for the summer. This means hardening them off so their very tender new growth doesn't get damaged the minute you put it outside. I will explain this more in the houseplant vacation section. Do not put them out until danger of frost is gone from your area. Geraniums like it warm. The warmer the better. If the nights are still too cold, they may stop flowering for a while.

## Giving Your Houseplants a Vacation

Your houseplants have had a long, hard winter. With little or no humidity, hot, dry temperatures or even cold drafts not to mention lack of light are all very hard on tropicals. I'll call them tropicals because that's where most of our houseplants came from, the tropics. Why not give them a little vacation outdoors for the summer? They will flourish outside in a protected corner of your garden or patio. It will remind them that they used to grow outside. They will love the extra light and the humidity. They will be happy once again. But there are a few steps to consider if your plants are to be but outside for the summer.

\* **STEP 1: Acclimating:** Select a protected spot outdoors, away from direct sun and free from wind. A corner with a shade tree overhead is the perfect site for vacationing houseplants. The reason for this is that they are not used to the intense light and the leaves could sunburn. If your plant is a sun-loving plant, keep it in the shade for a few days then gradually put in more sun until you have it right where you want it. If you are acclimating seedlings or newly planted flowers and bulbs you may need to bring them in at night if the temperatures get to chilly. Then put them back outside in the morning. (Protected spot only)

\* **STEP 2:** Move your houseplants outside in late spring, when nighttime temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees F. Like I said before these are **tropical** plants and they like it warm.

\* **STEP 3:** Spray the plants with a solution of mild 1/4 tsp. dishwashing liquid mixed in 1 qt. water to remove dust, dirt and insects. Wash the plants with fresh water after spraying with the soap solution. After being in the

house, the plants will enjoy a refreshing bath.

\* **STEP 4:** Repot your plants with a good potting mix. It's a lot easier to set up a repotting area outside in the shade. If your plant needs pruning, this is also the time to do that.

\* **STEP 5:** Fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer or add worm casting to the soil when repotting. You can also use liquid fertilizer throughout the summer.

\* **STEP 6:** Watch for insect pests, and treat the plants with the soap solution or an organic control if pest problems develop.

\* **STEP 7:** You can give your plants a weekly overhead watering during the morning hours so that the plants have time to dry during the day. Washing the foliage in the morning will prevent fungus diseases from developing and knock off any insects.

### Tips & Warnings

\* Provide extra care for tender tropical plants while they are outdoors.

\* When you bring the plants back inside, wash and clean the pots so that you don't bring in any soil or insect pests that may be hiding underneath.

\* Fertilize the foliage with an organic fertilizer while the plants are outdoors.

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## Cold Tolerant Flowers & Herbs for Spring Planting

Some annual flowers tolerate cold weather and light frosts, these are called the “Hardy Annuals”. They are the most cold tolerant. They will take a light frost and sometimes even freezing weather without being killed. In most cases, hardy annuals can be planted in the fall or in the spring before the last frost date. Try these hardy annuals and biennials in the ground or in container gardens: calendula, cornflower, snapdragons, larkspur, pansy, sweet alyssum, stocks, viola, and many dianthus cultivars. Most hardy annuals are not heat tolerant and



Plant a spring container garden

usually start to look bad and even die when the hot summer temperatures begin. At this time replant or plant heat loving plants around them.

Many herbs can be planted in cool weather too. Add them to your flower beds or containers. Here are a few choices:

Oregano, Thyme, Mint, Marjoram, Rosemary, Sage and Lavender these would all be fun planted with your flowers.

## My Hummingbird's Favorite Flowers

**Top favorite flowers for hummers: Butterflies love them too!**

**Bee Balm (Monarda didyma)**- A perennial in zones 4-9. It blooms in June and July. Bee balm comes in all shades of red, pinks and purples. It grows 20"-36" tall with a 3-5 ft spread. This flower grows in sun to light shade it will continue to bloom if you prune the old flowers off.

**Butterfly Bush (Buddleia species)**- Hardy to zones 4-9. Should be mulched over in colder zones. It blooms summer to fall with fragrant lilac shaped flowers. This plant can get 6-15 ft tall and 4-10 ft wide. Sun to light shade is preferred.

**Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa)**- This beautiful bright orange flowered perennial (4-9) blooms summer to fall. It will reseed in other areas of your garden. Sun is best. It gets 2-3 ft tall by 12-24" wide.

**Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis)**- This has a perfect red trumpet flower that hummingbirds seem to be most attracted to. A perennial: zones 4-9, it grows 3-4ft tall and 2ft wide. Plant in fertile, moist soil in part shade to full sun.

**Fuchsia (Fuchsia species)**- Fuchsia hanging baskets are a must for me. This annual will attract hummers all summer long. Place your fuchsia on a north or east porch. They like it a bit cooler so shade is good. Always pick off the fruit after the flower falls to promote new flowers.

**Honeysuckle Vine (Lonicera)** The fragrant trumpet-shaped flowers are very attractive to hummingbirds, and most

birds like the red or black berries. The leaves provide food for the larvae of many butterflies. I have a variegated leaf variety with pale pink and yellow flowers. My hummers love it. Be careful with this vine though some can be very invasive.

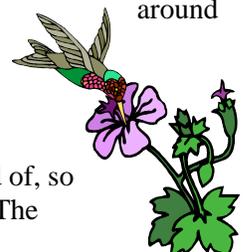
**Salvia (Salvia splendens)**- Annual salvias come in reds, purples and coral. Hummers love their trumpet flowers. Plant in full sun. Deadhead the flowers to keep them blooming all summer.

**Snapdragons (Antirrhinum)**- Another annual I must put in my garden are snapdragons. They remind me of my grandmother. She would show me how to play with them like tiny talking puppets. Grow in full sun to part shade. They will keep hummers around until frost.

**Trumpet Vine (Campsis radicans)**- A perennial vine hardy in zones 4-9. Once it gets established it will be very hard to get rid of, so make sure this is the vine for you. The hummers love it.

### How to make your own nectar:

Mix 4 parts water to 1 part sugar  
Boil until all sugar is dissolved  
Cool. Do not add food coloring, they don't need it and it's not good for them.  
Change the solution every 3 days or so. Keep leftovers in frig for 1 week.



## Summer Bulbs to Plant This Spring

Spring is the time of year to find summer flowering bulbs in your local garden shops or on-line. They should be planted at the time you buy them. Most summer bulbs are not hardy in our area, they will need to be dug up in the fall when they start to go dormant. When dug in the fall, allow the bulbs to air dry for one to two days and store them in a cool, dry place for planting next spring. There are many summer bulbs to choose.

**Lilies** are a very popular selection. They thrive in full sun to partial shade. It is important to provide adequate drainage and mulch these plants to keep their roots cool. These would be one of the hardy bulbs to plant this spring. You can even plant your Easter lily in the garden. These don't need to be dug up.

**Iris** is a lovely flower to have in a spring garden. I am lucky enough to have some of my grandmothers old-fashioned varieties. Grow them in



full sun. Proper soil drainage is important in preventing bacterial soft rot in the rhizomes. Also keep them debris free, this may help keep iris borer away.

**Dahlias** are another summer flowering bulbs that will add wonderful color and variety in your garden. They thrive in full sun or partial shade and prefer moist, well-drained soil. You can start these flowers early in the house in trays and transplant them later in the garden.

**Gladiolus** summer bulbs offer a more upright aspect to your garden with their long flower spikes. They like to be planted in full sun with moist soil that is well drained and has good air circulation. They make great cut flowers and come in many different colors to brighten your garden.

**Cannas, Callas and Caladium bulbs** also turn into great garden plants in the summer. Canna bulbs love the hot summer, growing well in full sun, but needing rich soil and a good moisture supply. Callas and Caladiums prefer shade.

All these flowering bulbs will be a wonderful addition of color to your garden this summer.

## Tomato Troubles

**Anthracnose** This is a fungal disease. It looks like water-soaked spots with dark rings on the fruit. Throw away any infected fruit. Do not compost it. Rotate crops every year. Promote good air circulation around plants.

**Blackheart** If you cut open the fruit and it has dark rotten spots inside, it is this. It can be caused by a calcium deficiency, lack of water during bud set. Use a calcium fertilizer for tomatoes and water well during bud set.

**Blossom Drop** Stress will cause all or some of the buds to fall off. This happens during large temperature swings, drought. Mulch early with dried grass( not chemically treated) or straw.

**Blossom—End Rot** Dark sunken spots on the bottom of the fruit. It can be caused by a calcium deficiency, lack of water during bud set. Use a calcium fertilizer for tomatoes and water well during bud set.

**Botrytis (gray mold)** This looks like water soaked spots on the leaves. The fruits can have white or yellowish halos. A gray mold may also appear. It is spread by spores in the soil, using a mulch will help.

**Catfacing** Ugly, gnarled fruits with scars near the blossom end. This is caused by cold or uneven temperatures during fruit development. Also even by viruses, fungi or insect damage. Don't plant too early and remove bad looking fruit.

**Cracking** Cracking at the stems or shoulders is caused by too much moisture during fruit development. Don't overwater at that time.

**Early Blight** This looks like dark spots surrounded by bull's-eye rings on the leaves. The fruits rot inside, starting at the stem. The blight can over winter in your soil, so clean up debris. Rotate crops , plant resistant varieties. **MULCH!**

## Do not plant near Black Walnuts

**Frost Damage** Tomatoes can't handle cold. The leaves will wilt and the stems will turn black. **Don't be in a hurry to plant. Our safe frost date is around Mat 20th.**

**Fusarium Wilt** The bottom leaves turn yellow and fall off first. The leaves also have a downward curl. The stems can have black or brown spots on them. Mulch to keep the soil cool will help.

**Late Blight** Dark spots on the leaves turn brown then papery. The entire plant can collapse all at once. Provide good air circulation and do not use overhead watering as this will spread the disease.

**Root-knot nematodes** These are microscopic type of worm. Plants will look wilted, stunted and yellowing. The roots will have lumps or knots in them. Marigolds planted with tomatoes can help.

**Tobacco mosaic virus** The leaves will look mottled and yellow. If you are a smoker, always wash your hands or you can spread the disease. There are some resistant varieties.

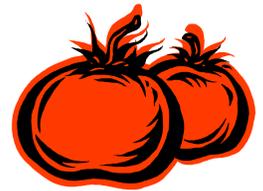
**Septoria leaf spot** This fungus on the leaves looks like little yellow dots that turn brown spots with halos around it. Remove infected leaves.

### Others

**.Nitrogen-deficiency-** The leaves look stunted and yellow. Use good organic matter.

**Phosphorus deficiency-** Produces a purplish cast on the leaves. When the soil warms up, it goes away.

**Potassium deficiency-** This causes the leaf margins to turn yellow and brown. Try kelp meal.



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Watch for eco-friendly  
lawn care products

Next Month's newsletter:  
**Tropical Patio Plants:** what to  
purchase and how to care for them in  
your outdoor living area.

Coming May 5th to Milton, WI.

*"Patty's Plants"*

*Natural and Organic*

*Garden Supply*

I will also be carrying organic herbs, veggies and  
flowering plants as well as container gardens and  
hanging baskets. E-mail me at:

patty@pattysplants.com

*Patty Bailey*

Here is a list of just a few of the heirloom and organic tomatoes I will be carrying

**Beam's Yellow Pear** -Indeterminate. Productive plants absolutely loaded with clusters of 1-2" pear-shaped fruits. Mild, meaty fruits perfect in salads, for snacking or drying. 70-80 days from transplant.

**Black Cherry** -Indeterminate. Finally, a cherry tomato with the characteristic full, smoky, complex flavors of the black tomatoes. Small 1" round fruits are more mahogany or dark pink than black, but are shiny and beautiful - they almost glisten in the sun! Very productive plants. 70-80 days from transplant.

**Black Krim** -Indeterminate. Green-shouldered mahogany fruits have the most deliciously-complex, sweet-smoky-salty flavor we've ever encountered. Great producer that excels in cooler weather. 75-80 days from transplant.

**Brandywine** -Indeterminate. Possibly the best tomato available. Large pink beefsteak fruits average 1+ pounds, and are sweet, juicy, and full of refreshing flavor. This is the heirloom tomato to which all others are compared, and no tomato garden is complete without it. 85 days from transplant

**Cherry Roma Grape**-Indeterminate. Large clusters of small, grape-shaped fruits full of sweet, spicy flavor. Great for snacking, salads, and drying. The best, most productive grape tomato they've ever grown, and the most requested of all the tomatoes they sold last year. 70-80 days from transplant.

**Garden Peach**-Indeterminate. If you could refer to any tomato variety as being fun, this would be it. 2 oz yellow fruits are ripe when blushed with peach. Their seed stock comes from Fedco Seeds, who describes it as "delicate" and, "lightly fruity" tasting. They couldn't say it better - in fact it topped one of their own "back-yard tomato taste tests" 3 years ago. Productive, tolerant plants, and "fun" sweet, delicious fruits that keep well too. What more could you ask for? About 70 days from transplant.

Contact me for more info: patty@pattysplants.com