



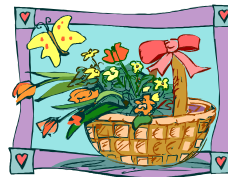
Patty's Plants

Volume 1, Issue 1

March Newsletter

Let's Get Ready For Spring!

Are you finished looking through the seed catalogs yet? Have you ordered your seeds or at least decided what you're going to plant this year? If you haven't it's not too late. Write down what seeds and supplies you are going to need. Do you need seed starting mix, containers to put them in, a lighting unit. Maybe you've done all that. If not, let's get started. In this newsletter I will share with you what veggie seeds to start first if you are in zone 4 or 5. Once you've gotten your seeds started, go out to the garage or shed and get your garden tools prepared. My garage is such a mess right now I may not be able to dig out my tools until next year. Oh no, I'll dig them out alright. I will somehow get through the mess and see what tools will need to be cleaned and what tools to turn into garden art. What would spring be like if there wasn't any garden clean up to do? See below for easy clean up methods. Also in this newsletter I will give you tips on getting your veggie and flower gardens ready for planting. And we must not forget our tiny spring friends, the hummingbird. Get those feeders out early.



Plus, I mustn't forget my *Grandma Vi's Natural Dyed Easter Egg Recipes*

Easy clean up of your gardening tools

It would have been much easier for me if I had only cleaned my garden tools last fall. But I didn't so I must do it now. Here is the easiest way that I use to clean my tools. If there is caked on soil, use mineral oil or even easier a spray on veggie oil. Spray it on and let sit for a few minutes then rinse off with the garden hose. Dry with an old towel. Look to see if any tool has rust on it, rub with steel wool. Sharpen any tool that needs it, they will be easier to work with. If the wooden handles have splinters, use sandpaper and smooth out. Use linseed oil with a soft cloth to treat the wood. Clean your tools after using so you don't spread any diseases or viruses from one plant to the next.



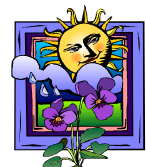
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Edible Flowers:

The following is a list of flowers that are commonly considered edible. There are still variations in each person's reaction to any food, including flowers. Use caution and always grow organically.

Pansy, Nasturtiums, Dandelion, Red Clover, Hibiscus, Rose, Violets, Calendula, Chives, Chamomile, and Bee Balm.



What vegetables to plant first inside and out.

Outside

April 15

Asparagus (roots), beet seed, carrot seed, chard seed, kohlrabi seed, lettuce seed, onion sets, parsnip seed, pea seed, seed potatoes (early, midseason, late), radish seed, rhubarb plant, spinach seed.



Inside

Feb. 15 –onion seed

March 15– from seeds:

Broccoli, cabbage (early), cauliflower, eggplant, lettuce (leaf)

April 1 —from seed

Pepper

April 15– from seed:

Tomato,



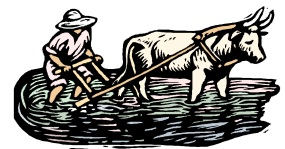
Plant carrot seed and radish seed together to save space.

GO to: www.pattysplants.com for the Wisconsin Planting Chart.

Preparing your garden soil

This was from last months newsletter. It is very important so I thought I should include it in this one too.

If starting a new area, remove the soil, weeds or existing plants. Dig at least 6-8” deep to loose the dirt. A good draining soil is very important. Dig a hole in the area you’ve chosen, pour water in it to see how quickly it drains. If it’s slow you’ll have to amend the soil. You can do this by adding a soil conditioners or sand. In a 10x5 ft area you will need at least a 50# bag of sand. Add either composted cow, chicken, horse manure, worm casting, mushroom compost or your own homemade compost. 50-100# of compost to a 10x10 area. These are all wonderful soil conditioners that will help to build your soil.



Prepare the Area

Plants are only as good as the soil you grow them in. By working in organic matter over a period of time, you will get great results. Every year will get better and better. Add leaves to your garden in the fall and let the worms take over. You can top dress with organic matter around your flower, herb beds and even around your trees and shrubs. If you would like to know what type of soil you have or what you will need to add to it, you can have a soil test done. There are soil test kits available which you can purchase at your local garden shop or call your county extension office and they will tell you how to take soil samples and where to send them in.

Here’ one way of telling what type of soil to have:

Rub a little soil between your finger and thumb, if it’s sticky and rolls into a ball you have **Clay**. **Sand** is coarse and gritty . **Silt** is smooth. **Limestone** is dry, crumbly and grayish in color. **Peat** is black and moist.



Cleaning up your Flower Beds

Cut back any perennial foliage you left on all winter with the exception of Salvia, Russian Sage, Lavender and Artemesia. These you can prune when you start to see new growth on last years stems. Then prune just above the new growth. Cut back ornamental grass when you start to see new sprigs coming up from the ground. When the last frost (around May 20th here) in your area has pasted, prune butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) or when it starts to show new growth. Clean up any debris so you don't get any bunnies or other critters wanting to make a new nest in your flower beds. They need to know the "beds" are not for them!



Pruning Shrubs and Trees in Spring

Most trees and shrubs can be pruned in early spring before the new grow starts. There are a few that you must wait to prune until after they have flowered or you will be cutting off this years flower buds. These would include: Lilacs, Forsythia, Weigela, Rhododendrons and Azaleas. Usually a good rule is: if the tree or shrub flowers in the spring then wait. You can also clean up any dead or dying branches and remove any branches that are crossing over each other.



Applying Organic Controls Early

Late winter, early spring before the trees start getting new growth. Is the best time to use dormant oils sprays. These sprays are safe and also effective in controlling insects that have nested in your plants all winter. The oils reduce the amounts of insects such as bag worms, mites, aphids and mealybugs that may hatch out this year. Use milky spore for Japanese Beetle larvae. This takes longer to work than chemical controls but once it starts working it will work for 20 years or more. Plus it's safer and healthier for the environment.



Use oil sprays early on your fruit trees.

Growing Healthy Tomatoes

Preparing your soil is the first step in healthy tomatoes. Work in 3-4 inches of organic matter. When I plant my tomatoes, I also dig the whole deep and mix in worm castings and an organic tomato fertilizer. Then cut a piece of a paper towel roll or use a small piece of a paper bag to wrap around the stem of the tomato to protect it from a nasty cut worm. They come out at night and cut your tomatoes right off at the soil level then just leave it laying there for you to find the next day. They want bunnies to take the blame. Anyway, bury half of the stem with cardboard or paper underground leaving some sticking above ground. Top dress with a little more worm castings. If you have mushroom compost, you can top dress with that too. Water thoroughly. I always mulch my tomatoes with dried grass clippings. You can use straw too. This will keep any soil borne diseases from splashing up on your leaves causing bacterial leaf spots. I do remove some of the



lower leaves as the plant grows so it puts more energy into setting fruit. Never let the soil dry out during the time when they are setting fruit. Inconsistent watering and lack of calcium can cause blossom end rot. That is why I mulch and use a fertilizer designed especially for tomatoes. Don't forget to use a cage or stake your tomatoes to keep them off the ground and support their heavy branches. Never water your tomatoes with an over head sprinkler and always wash your hands first if you are a smoker as both of these can spread diseases.

Growing Peppers

I grow my peppers basically the same way I grow my tomatoes so follow the same guidelines. Peppers and tomatoes are in the same nightshade family. Don't plant them in the same spot as you planted your tomatoes last year.



They can get some of them same diseases. Peppers like really warm temperatures so don't be in a rush to plant them. I usually plant them in early June. If you plant them when the soil is still cool, it will stunt their growth. And certainly won't help them grow faster.

Earlier in this case is not better.



Natural Dyed Easter Eggs



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Grandma Vi's Natural Dyed Easter Eggs

6 large eggs

4 cups water

Yellow and red onion skins

String

Bring water to a boil.

While waiting for the water to boil (or do some ahead of time), put eggs in onion skins, wrap the string all around the eggs to hold the skins in place.

When the water is ready, gently place the eggs in the water. Bring it back to a boil. Then turn down and let simmer for 15-20 minutes. Cool eggs and unwrap.

For variations:

Hard boil the eggs and cool.

Use water from freshly cooked beets or cranberries for pink dye.

Use green beans or broccoli water for light green dye.

Use the water right away or save in frig. a day or two until ready to dye eggs.

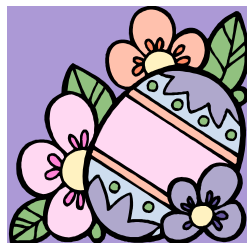
Add 1T vinegar to the veggie water. Place the cooked eggs in and soak. When they have turned color, take them out.

You can boil eggs in tea water, use raspberry tea for pink, black tea for brown.

Boiling with spinach leaves, they will turn them a pretty shade of green.

Soak the cooked eggs in grape juice, they will be light lavender.

Pomegranate juice will give them a great shade of dark pink.



www.pattysplants.com or e-mail to patty@pattysplants.com

Patty's Plants

Easy Edible Container Gardens with Herbs and Vegetables.

What is better than home grown herbs and vegetables? Nothing, that's right. If you're not able to have a planted garden, why not try a container garden. You just need a sunny spot, a nice size pot, organic container planting mix or potting soil with a couple of large handfuls of worm castings added to it and some plants. The container should be at least 16" wide by 12" deep. The bigger and deeper the pot the more plants you can put in it.

For an Italian container:

Plant a patio or cherry tomato in the center of the pot with herbs such as oregano, basil, parsley and chives around it.

For a spring garden: Use a small long trellis and plant pea seeds next to it. Plant different types of lettuce as a covering around the peas. Add chives in between the lettuce.

For a fiesta garden: Plant one of your favorite hot peppers with cilantro, papalo, basil, lemon thyme.

For more information on herb and vegetable containers, contact me at: patty@pattysplants.com

Coming soon in Southern 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. For opening day and location information, e-mail me at: patty@pattysplants.com

April Newsletter:

- More on Vegetable Gardening
- Container gardening
- Tomato Troubles
- Getting your houseplants ready for a vacation outside.



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Hummingbirds, getting your feeders out early.

Hummingbirds are amazing creatures. If you've ever been in a garden working or enjoying it and had a hummingbird buzz by your head, you have to just freeze and watch them. I usually hold my breath, afraid I'll disturb them and they'll fly away. The way they buzz from one flower to the next is incredible. This spring before your garden flowers are blooming get ready for the hummingbirds. Clean out the feeder use only water, vinegar and a stiff bottle brush since birds are sensitive to chemicals. Clean often since the sugar water can create mold and bacteria quickly. Many diseases can spread and we don't want to make these special birds sick.

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.



Hummingbirds are great pollinators

Top favorite flowers for hummers:

Bee Balm (Monarda didyma), Butterfly Bush (Buddleia species), Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa), Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis), Fuchsia (Fuchsia species), Salvia (Salvia splendens), Snapdragons (Antirrhinum) and Trumpet Vine (Campsis radicans). For information on the top favorites go to:

www.pattysplants.com