



www.actongardenclub.org

The Monthly AGC 'Dirt'

April 2022

The board passed a motion regarding Covid protocol for all indoor club gatherings including General Meetings, Hort Meetings, Board Meetings and Floral Design. All attendees must wear masks. There will be no refreshments served allowing us to remain masked throughout. If you are not vaccinated, please do not attend.

April 5th Annual Meeting will be held in room 204 of Town Hall



We have been asked not to park in either the lot behind Town Hall or the library.
You may park in the Congregational Church's lot or behind the Fire Station.
Remember to use the cross walks to cross Main Street.

9:30 AM Time to catch up with friends and meet the club's new members
10 AM Monthly Business Meeting followed by the Annual Meeting
11 AM Fun and Games

April 12th Horticulture Study Group

9 AM Program: "*Companion Plants and Attracting Beneficial Insects*" will be presented by Barbara Wissell

April 26th 9 AM Board Meeting will include both incoming and outgoing members

Don't forget to pay your Annual Dues by mailing your check and completed "Pink Form" to Rheta (2 Shady Lane, Acton) by April 30th

Membership

Please make the following changes in your yearbook:

Sue Nordhausen's email address should be nordhausen555@gmail.com

Dorothy Robbins has a new address: 1 Harvest Circle, Apt. # 315, Lincoln, MA, 01773.

If you have a change of address, phone number or email address, please let Membership Chairman, Melissa Coucke know. mjcoucke@gmail.com

2/28/22 Sue Nordhausen's spring colors.

The Plant Sale is right around the corner!

Members new and old, please, read through the **instructions** and **timeline** for the **May 21, 2022 Plant Sale**. *There are changes from years past, so peruse at*

will but before May 15th so you will know what is going on the week of the sale.

- **Supplies:** You can pick up **soil, tongue depressors and pots** at **Fran Hearn's garden chalet**. Located behind Fran's house on the left side of the driveway. The supply cabana (built by Fran's husband Patrick) houses all supplies. The product we are supplying at Fran's kiosk is *Scott's Premium Top Soil*. The bags are 26 pounds vs the 40 pound bags we used before. Although the bags are about the same size, the mix no longer requires additional peat to lighten the mix. Ideally, you will need fewer bags of this mixture. Fran will reorder as need indicates.
- Members are asked to use the clipboard in the shed to **sign out the number of soil bags taken**. The clipboard also has information about and pictures of **coir** under the sign out pages.
- **Supplies can be picked up any day of the week before 7 PM starting April 4th. Fran will be out of town May 9th through May 13th so please do not come to the house on those days. Plan ahead!**
- Members who may have been stashing 6" to 9" pots over the past two years and want to unload them ***deliver them to the pen behind the garage at the Red House and stack them neatly any day after 5:30 or on the weekend so we do not interfere with the town trucks. Do NOT bring pots to Fran's house. Pots smaller than 5" or larger than 9" are not wanted.***
- **Digging:** plan your digging to allow your plants **two or more weeks** in their pots. *Dig 20 or more plants*. Do NOT bring any invasive species to the *Red House*. **Do NOT bring any unlabeled plants to the Red House.**

• ***That's a lot of DO NOTS. Now onto more "dos".***

- **Labeling:** Each plant delivered to the *Red House* at 468 Main Street (Route 27) **must have a labeled tongue depressor**. If you do not know the Latin names for your plants, put the common name on the tongue depressor. The good folks at the *Red House* will help you with the missing info. **Check the illustration on page 43 of your Yearbook** for the correct way to write up a tongue depressor. As shown, leave space for pricing and codes.
- If you are digging and donating a large number of plants and need help digging your plants, or more importantly **CAN HELP** digging and potting plants, please contact **Jodi MacDonald** to sign up. Trust me when we say the garden education you will receive far outweighs the labor.
- Since this division of potting/digging labor is divided, please reply to Fran Hearn and Jodi MacDonald. They talk and will work out any confusion.
Thank you Fran and Jodi.
- **Delivering plants to the Red House: Drop off dates & times will be announced later.**

The *Red House* is across Woodbury Lane from Town Hall. **Enter from Rte. 27.** There will be wagons onto which to load your plants. There will also be lots

of folks to help you. Drop off your **properly labeled plants** and **exit via Newtown Road**. For purposes of the Plant Sale, it is ***one way in, one way out***.

- **PLEASE WATER YOUR PLANTS THE DAY BEFORE YOU DELIVER THEM. THE GOOD FOLKS AT THE *RED HOUSE* WILL WATER THEM THE DAY YOU DELIVER.**

Friday May 20th. Starting at **3:30 PM**, tables will be set up and covered with plastic then plants. **Everyone is encouraged to come help.**

- **Saturday, May 21th, The Plant Sale:** *All hands are on deck and all hands are needed to help with CLEANUP. Many hands will speed up the process.* The chairperson under whom you will assist will let you know what time to arrive. **The Plant Sale opens at 9:00 AM sharp and will close at 1:00 PM sharp. At 1:15 PM, members can shop at the Red House for half-price plants. While helping clean up, go around and pick the plants you want in your gardens. This will be an honor system sale. Put whatever plants you want on a wagon and get them to your car. Tally the prices, divide by two and send Rheta Roeber a check (made out to the Acton Garden Club) for that amount. The on-site sale will conclude at 1:45 PM at which time remaining plants will be transported to Susanne Fuller's house (5 Robert Road, Acton) where you can go and select whatever you want at half price through the following Wednesday. Again, tally, divide by 2 and send a check in that amount to Rheta Roeber.**
- **If you own a pickup, we could sure use your wheels and help to transport some of the remaining plants from the Red House to Susanne's house.**

- **The Plant Sale Raffle Committee** (Mary Smith, Gena Manalan, Fran Hearn, Mary Abbott) is rounding up a fabulous list of great prizes. *The Raffle Committee will begin selling tickets (5 for \$5) at the April 5th meeting.* So bring **money (preferably a check)** and **address labels**, and prepare to win big on the day of the **Plant Sale**.

This is a wonderful way to help support the plant sale, especially if you are not able to contribute the 20 plants that are recommended. Another way to help us raise more money is to buy tickets that you then sell to your friends, family, and neighbors, especially those who may not be able to attend the plant sale. There is no reason our club members have to pay for all of the tickets.

There will be a demonstration in Cathy Fochtman's driveway of how to pot safely. Date to be announced so stay tuned.

When is it Warm Enough to Plant?

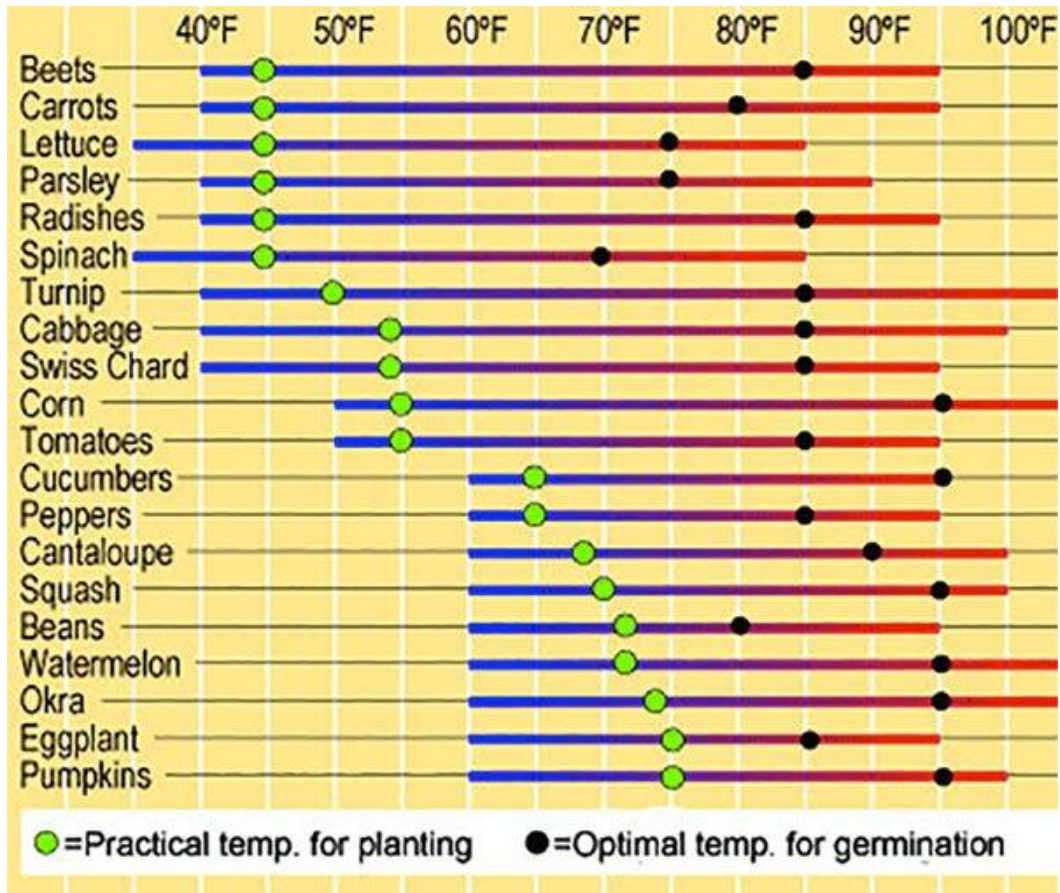


If you want to get your vegetable garden off to a fast start, you need to plant your seeds in soil that's warm enough to ensure good germination. For each type of seed — beans, carrots, lettuce — there is a range of temperatures at which that particular type of seed will germinate (see the chart below). Beans, for example, will only germinate if the soil temperature is above 60 degrees F and no warmer than 95 degrees F.



You can use a **Compost Thermometer** to measure soil temperatures. There is also an "optimum temperature" at which seeds germinate most readily. In the case of beans, that optimum germination temperature is 80 degrees F. In a perfect world, you would wait for the soil in your garden to be 80 degrees F before planting your beans. At that temperature, you could expect nearly every seed to germinate. Germination rates may be at 70 percent rather than 100 percent, but when spring comes, we are eager to get our gardens planted, and we don't want to wait around until midsummer to plant beans. In cold climates, the soil temperature in our gardens may never reach 80 degrees, and even if it did, by that time the crops wouldn't have a chance to mature before frost. Hot-climate gardeners need to get their crops planted early so they will mature before the heat of midsummer.

So how does a gardener know when the soil is warm enough to plant? Dr. Jerry Parsons, Extension Horticulturist at the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, has identified what he calls a "realistic" soil temperature for germination. This is a soil temperature at which gardeners can expect good germination and strong early growth. Germination rates may be at 70 percent rather than 100 percent, but you can just sow the seeds a little more thickly.



The chart above indicates the minimum and maximum germination temperature ranges for each vegetable crop. The location of the black dot indicates the optimum germination temperatures (according to the University of California at Davis). The green dot is the "realistic" soil temperatures that Dr. Parsons recommends to ensure good germination in the garden. For practical purposes, you can start planting as soon as the soil reaches this temperature.

Recent floral arrangements greeting patrons at the Acton Library's circulation desk. Looks like spring time.



2/28/22 Sue Nordhausen's spring colors.



Susan Harrigan's creation on 3/16/22



This is Rheta's sensational Amaryllis which was purchased as a bulb through Susanne Fuller and the garden club back in the fall.

It is now 34" tall and has 9" diameter flowers. Really makes a statement.

Washington Post 33/17/22

[Houseplants awaken in spring. Here's how to care for them.](#)

Like humans, houseplants have light-driven internal clocks that affect their behavior. In winter, when the days are shorter, many plants enter a period of slow or no growth. More light in spring triggers active growth, which means it's time to tweak your plant-care routines.

Your houseplant-care needs will depend on where you're living during this transition from winter to spring, says Sarah Humke, research and development manager at [Wild Interiors](#). Floridians, for example, might see more plant growth as early as March, while those in northern states may not see changes until late April or early May.

No matter where you are, though, your plants will let you know when they're ready for a change. "When you start to see smaller leaves growing from the soil or off the shoots, that's your trigger" to switch your care routine, says [Clydette Alsup-Egbers](#), an associate professor of horticulture at Missouri State University.

Here are five ways to switch up your plant-care routine for spring, according to gardening and plant experts.

Tweak your watering schedule. When houseplants start to grow more, you'll probably need to water them more than you did in winter. But there's no hard-and-fast rule about how often or how much to water them; instead, it depends on the conditions of your home.

[The right way to care for one of nature's most neglected creatures: The houseplant](#)

If you're running heat or central air, your plants may need more water, because your humidity will be lower. Plants in a more humid environment — whether that's a steamy bathroom or a home in a soupier climate — might need less water.

A plant's location also factors into watering. Plants in south- and west-facing windows get more light and may be thirstier than those under grow lights or in north-facing windows.

Soil is the best indicator for when to water, so check your plants regularly, especially during the transition from winter to spring. "Stick your finger into the soil about an inch," Alsup-Egbers says. "If it's dry, water, but if it's moist, don't." If water comes out of the drainage holes at the bottom of the pot, you may be watering too much.

Start fertilizing. Your plants also need more nutrients when they start sending up new shoots and leaves. Starting in late April or early May, Humke suggests using a houseplant-specific fertilizer and diluting it to half-strength. The more a plant is growing, the more fertilizer it will need, so you may need to ramp up to a full-strength solution by summer.

Carl Johnson, a gardener at the [United States Botanic Garden](#), suggests fertilizing each time you water while the plant is actively growing. Most houseplants don't need to be fertilized in winter.

Give your plants an outdoor vacation. To kick-start your houseplants' growth, consider moving them outdoors during the warmer months. "After spending all winter in a dry desert, plants love being out in the heat and humidity, because they're used to tropical environments," Humke says. The elements can be beneficial, too. Wind, Alsup-Egbers says, can make plants' stems stronger, and the rain can wash dust off the leaves. It's best to wait until overnight temperatures reach the mid-50s or low 60s before taking your houseplants outside for the season. Or make sure there's no more than a 10-to-15-degree difference in temperature between indoors and outdoors. For example, if you set your house to 75 degrees in winter, wait until the overnight outdoor temperature reaches 65. "Too big of a temperature transition could shock and damage the plant," Humke says.

Too much direct sunlight can burn plants, so keep them in a shady area. If you move them outside, plants should stay there for the whole summer, Johnson says, because too many changes could cause stress-induced harm to the plant. If you'd rather not move a plant outside, consider relocating it to a sunnier window for spring. (Avoid places near air-conditioning vents, because cold air can strip plants of moisture.)

Do some spring cleaning. Johnson suggests removing dead or damaged leaves from the soil and the plant, because this will improve your plant's appearance and help it to grow.

Also consider dusting the leaves. "Plants that have been inside all winter tend to get dusty, which can inhibit photosynthesis," Johnson says. Moisten two soft cloths or sponges with room-temperature water, then gently pull the leaves through them. If the plant is large or extremely dusty, Alsup-Egbers says you can give it a tepid shower in your bathroom.

Repot if needed. As a plant grows, it may need a roomier home. If the plant is much larger than the height of the pot, or if you can see a lot of the roots when you take the plant out to look at it, then it's [time to repot](#), Alsup-Egbers says. Upgrade to a pot that's an inch or two larger in diameter, then fill it with potting mix, add the plant and give it a drink.