

May, 2021

If you have not already cut back ornamental grasses and the foliage of hellebores be sure to do so now. New growth will look more attractive without last season's old foliage.

Do not plant annuals too early. They do not like nighttime temperatures below 40 degrees.

Before purchasing plants for your garden, consider the hardiness zone. We are zone 6A. Check for height, width, light requirements, susceptibility for diseases and insects and drought tolerance of plants. Do not select plants that are known for having insect and disease problems.

Most plants (lawns, vegetables, perennials, annuals, trees and shrubs) need one inch of water per week. It is better to water with one or two deep waterings per week than to water lightly each day. This encourages shallow rooting. Having a rain gauge is helpful.

Raise lawn mower cutting height this month to 2½-3 inches which will help keep turf more tolerant of drought. There is a direct correlation between shoot and root growth; the higher the top, the deeper the roots. This also inhibits weed growth. Sharpen your mower blades. Dull blades tear the blades resulting in a brownish appearance.

Use *organic* mulches as they provide many benefits, including moisture retention, fluctuations in soil temperature, weed suppression, and protection from mechanical damage from line trimmers and lawn mowers. Organic mulches such as bark mulch also look attractive and help with the addition of organic matter to the soil through decomposition. Remove established perennial weeds before mulch is applied. Avoid mulch depths greater than 4 inches and do not allow mulch to contact the base of trees and shrubs.

Cut faded flowers from tulips and daffodils. Do not cut bulb foliage, allow it to die naturally (that is, until the leaves are yellow or limp). Do not fold over or tie foliage, as this will inhibit photosynthesis and therefore, the storage of nutrients needed for next year's flowers.

Annuals and perennials will keep a steady bloom performance if their faded flowers are continually removed, which prevents seed formation.

Get out the peony cages and get them in place to prevent possible damage as their heavy flowers develop. Cage any other floppy plants as they emerge.

This is a good time to divide large hostas and daylilies into smaller clumps.

Prune lilacs, viburnums, deutzia, mockorange, spirea and other spring flowering shrubs when they finish blooming.