

Note that the information in our monthly tips is intended for gardening in the Bountiful, UT area and may not be accurate for different climates.

May Gardening

Ave High 72° F.
Ave Low 45° F.
Ave Moisture 1.49”

Each year is different, let the weather be your guide. Use this gardening guide as a simple reminder as to what needs to be done in your garden this month.

May weather is spring at its best. Everything is alive: Trees, shrubs, and flowers are all putting on a show. Granted, there are still some chilly evenings, and a chance of snow is still in the forecast.



However, warm days are the norm, and the full force of the season is upon us. May is a time when the weather can either turn your garden into a wonderland, or into a frozen wasteland. Be aware of the weather forecasts and plan your gardening activities accordingly.

Gardening guides are based on previous years, but they can't predict a freak frost or snowstorm. If a frost or cold weather is in the forecast, protect your tender plants with a mulch, newspapers, light cloth, a frost blanket, or with clear poly film over the plants. Do not let the plastic touch the plants and be sure to remove the plastic as soon as the danger of frost is over. If plastic touches leaves, the leaves may freeze-burn. If the cover is not removed, your plants may sunburn.

On the other extreme, if the weather is sunny and dry, don't forget about watering. Most flowers and shrubs need consistent water, and newly planted seedlings will die if their roots are allowed to dry out.

Trees & Shrubs

√ Look around and notice what your neighbors are growing in their gardens, and what they are doing in their yards. Try some of their ideas and try some of your own. There are no mistakes in gardening, just experiments.



√ It's not too late to fertilize your young trees and shrubs. Use an acid-type of plant food to feed plants like Rhododendrons, Japanese Maples, Azaleas, and hydrangeas. Use an all-purpose garden fertilizer to feed roses, deciduous shrubs and trees. Be sure to water the fertilizer in thoroughly after it is applied.

√ Early flowering shrubs such as Forsythias, Quince, and Spireae should be pruned back after they have finished blooming. Cut back a third of the oldest canes to ground level, then cut back one third of the remaining branches by one third of their height to keep them short.

√ Remove the wilting seedheads from Rhododendrons and Azaleas, so that the plants energy can go to foliage growth, and to next year's flowers, rather than seeds.

√ Work lime in the soil around your Hydrangeas

to produce pink flowers, or use Aluminum Sulphate for blue flowers. Re apply in 6 to 8 weeks.

√ Remove any sucker growth from fruit trees as soon as it appears. Spray the suckers with Sucker Stopper to prevent them from growing back.

√ Pines and spruce can be kept to a compact size by pinching off some of the new growth; the 'candles'. Pinch the candles after they are fully extended but before the new needles are fully developed. Pruning the new growth later in the year will distort, or mis-shape the tree.

√ Junipers, yews, boxwood, and arborvitae can be trimmed, shaped, and pruned all summer. Do not try to prune over-grown shrubs too severely. You must leave some green growth or buds on all of the main branches.

√ Lilacs should be pruned lightly after they finish blooming, removing sucker growth and dead blooms. Feed lilacs in May with a good all purpose fertilizer. They also benefit from a small amount of lime, even in high ph soil conditions. Lime helps darken the color of the blossoms.



√ Water young, and newly planted, ornamentals as needed. Do not water older trees and shrubs until they need it, there should be plenty of soil moisture for now.

√ Plant new trees and shrubs before the weather gets real hot.

√ Mulch around young trees and shrubs to conserve moisture and to control weed growth.

√ Remove winter tree wraps for new summer growth.

√ Remove tree stakes that have been in place more than one growing season. Re-tie the stakes if needed, but do not leave the stakes unattended or they may girdle or damage the trunk.

√ Fertilize young trees to help increase growth rates. Do not fertilize older trees this late in the season unless they are struggling.

√ Caution, be careful using line trimmers around trees and shrubs so as not to damage tender bark. A long, vertical wound will not kill a tree. However, a small horizontal cut, completely around a trunk, will kill even a large tree.



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continued from page 1

Roses

√ Monitor your roses carefully. Remember to fertilize them every 6 to 8 weeks from April until mid-August. Keep them sprayed for aphids, thrips, and other pests and diseases, such as black spot and mildew. Dead head them regularly to promote more blossoms.

√ Roses are drought tolerant, but they bloom better when the plants are watered properly. Water roses 12" deep once every two weeks in the spring, and once a week during the hot summer weather.

√ The more you deadhead roses the more blossoms your plant will produce. Remove spent flowers at the first 5-leaf leaflet. If you want a long stem blossom to take inside, try to cut it early in the morning, and trim it above a 5-leaf leaflet.

√ Seal all cuts during April and May to prevent the Cane Borer from becoming a problem. Use Elmer's glue, fingernail polish, or even a 'dab of mud' to seal the cuts. Do not use black pruning paint on roses.

Flowers

√ Transplant your seedlings outside as soon as you are sure that all danger of frost is past. Be sure to 'harden off' your seedlings before putting them outside in the direct sunlight.

√ To 'harden off' seedlings you can: 1. Let them wilt, just a little, each time before watering them (do not fertilize them during the hardening off period). 2. Put them outside, in a shady location, during the day, and bring them back inside during the night. 3. Cool your growing area to 50 F. for a week or so.

√ Don't tempt the weather and plant your seedlings outside too early. A late frost can eliminate the benefit of all the hard work you did in March and April. **It's better to plant a week too late than a week too early.**

√ Dahlias, Gladiolas, tuberous Begonias, Lilies, Cannas, and other summer flowering bulbs can be planted this month. Gladiolas bulbs may be planted at 2 week increments until the first of July to provide you with cut flowers until the first frost.

√ Delphiniums, Phlox, Daylilies, Carnations, Aubrietia, Candytuft, Basket of Gold, Primroses, Hosta, Coral Bells,



Saxifraga, and other perennials may all be set into the garden any time from May through August.

√ Break off wilting Tulip or Daffodil flower heads, but continue to feed and care for the plants until the foliage has died back naturally. Old plantings of Daffodils may be divided and moved when they have finished blooming. Water them thoroughly after transplanting, or store them cool and dry until you replant them in the fall. It is best not to dig or move spring flowering bulbs until their foliage has turned yellow and died back.

√ Plant Pansies and Snapdragons any time now, they love the cold weather. Dianthus, Petunias, Geraniums, Marigolds, Fuchsias and Impatiens should be ready to plant by mid month. Toward the end of the month, it should be warm enough to plant out the more tender annuals like Sweet Potato Vine, Salvia, Zinnias, Marigolds, Vinca and Lobelia.

√ Lightly side dress perennials with an all-purpose fertilizer, such as 16-16-8 multi-purpose fertilizer. Avoid spilling the fertilizer on the plant or you may burn the leaves. Be careful not to damage the shallow roots when you cultivate it into the soil.

√ Put stakes or grow rings next to your taller flowers early in the season. This will help to support the plant against winds and makes it easier to 'train' them.

√ Promptly remove spent flowers from any plant unless your intent is to harvest the seeds. In many species of plants (especially annuals), removing the dead flowers (deadheading) will promote further blossoms.

√ Plant annual flowers for summer color. Continue to plant and divide perennials for seasonal color.

√ Mulch perennial and annual gardens for weed control and to help maintain moisture in the soil.

√ Begin pinching chrysanthemums for bushier plants. Don't pinch them back after mid-July.

√ To have more or larger flowers, do not remove foliage from spring blooming bulbs until it dies down naturally, this develops stronger blooms for next year.

√ Plant container gardens and hanging baskets using **Black Gold** or **Gardener's Gold** potting soil. Mix **Soil Moist** crystals in the soil to help retain consistent moisture.

√ If you have containers from last year, dump out all of the soil and re-fill it with fresh



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continued from page 2

potting soil. You can also mix the old soil 50/50 with fresh potting soil and then use the older soil as long as your pots have not had any soil disease problems.



Vegetables & Fruit

✓ Sweet potatoes will grow in Utah. They are fun to grow and great to eat fresh from the garden. Sweet potato starts should be available in May. They cannot tolerate any cold weather, so plant them late, and harvest them before the cold weather damages them. Read our **Sweet Potato Handout** for more information about these fun vegetables.

✓ You can harvest asparagus until the spear size decreases. The same with Rhubarb, harvest until the stem size decreases. Remove any flower stems that the rhubarb may produce.

✓ Rotate vegetable crops to help control pests, diseases and to help keep the soil in good condition.

✓ Carrots, lettuce, potatoes, corn, beans, peas and most of the popular vegetables can be seeded or planted directly into the vegetable garden at any time now.

✓ Dust seeds with Bonide Garden Dust when planting them in cold, or wet soil, to help prevent them from rotting.

✓ Wait until mid to late May before planting the warmer weather crops like tomatoes, squash, cucumber, pumpkins and peppers. Gourds may be planted later in the month.

✓ Check the tomatoes you planted last month, inside your Wall of Water, to see how close they are to blooming. You may get to pick your first tomato in July.

✓ You may begin to see the first strawberries by late this month. The birds will enjoy them very much if you don't cover them with bird netting.

✓ Mound soil around potato plants to encourage more tuber formation. Continue hilling potatoes regularly.

✓ Plant kitchen herbs for summer use in dishes or food preservation. Many herbs grow well in containers on the deck or patio.

✓ Keep an eye out for Aphids and Cutworms. There are many excellent products available for insect and disease controls, both Organic and Inorganic.



✓ Plant a second crop of radish-

es, spinach, lettuce and onions. Plant corn and beans every two weeks for an extended harvest.

✓ Spray fruit trees with needed pesticides to control insects and diseases. Download a copy of USU's fruit pest control guide for detailed information about when and what to use.

<http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/home-orchard-guide.pdf>

✓ Thin heavy fruit set on apples to increase fruit size, and to increase next year's crop. You must remove the excessive apples by mid-June to affect next years crop. Any fruit thinned after that will help increase this year's fruit size, but will not affect next year's crop.

✓ Spray Apples and Pears regularly to prevent wormy fruit. Start spraying approximately three weeks after they bloom until mid-September. An organic insecticide for apples and pears is Spinosad. It is safe to use and very effective on codling moth, cherry fruit fly, raspberry cane girdler, cabbage looper, and even aphids and spidermites.

✓ Peach, nectarine, apricot, and cherry trees may need to be sprayed to control coryneum blight. Watch carefully for cat facing insects. You have to spray to prevent these insects from doing their damage.

Lawn

✓ Withhold early summer watering until needed to promote more drought tolerant lawns. Water lawns about 1.5" per week. Apply 1/2" of water each time you water. Do not water your lawn every day.



✓ Fertilize your lawn every 2 months from April to October. Try not to fertilize during July or early-August when the weather is extremely hot. Use either Spring & Summer Lawn fertilizer or Dr Earth Organic Lawn Food.

✓ Kill dandelions before they bloom. Spray for broadleaf lawn weeds while the temperatures are between 40 degrees and 85 degrees.

✓ May is a good month to repair your lawn. Fill in the bare spots by slightly loosening surface of the soil and sow a good quality lawn seed over the area evenly. Keep the patch moist by covering with light mulch of peatmoss or lawn clippings.

✓ This is the time to eliminate lawn weeds by hand pulling, or by the application of a 'weed and feed' fertilizer. Kill them, or remove them before the plants go to seed. If



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continued from page 3

possible, just spot treat the broadleaf weeds rather than applying weed & feed over the entire lawn. Using fewer weed chemicals is safer around the flowers and vegetables.



✓ Setting your mower for a higher cut during the spring months will help the grass to grow in fuller and help choke out the weeds. Mow bluegrass at 1.5" to 2 inches.

✓ Prevent Spurge this month by applying **IFA Crabgrass Preventer**, or **Halts without fertilizer**. Be sure to cover the park strip and edges of the sidewalks and driveways thoroughly. Spurge grows best in the hottest areas of the lawn. Once applied, you should not use a lawn edger along the side walks. Anything that disturbs the soil will deactivate the week preventer.

✓ Watch for Insect and Disease problems. If grubs or chinchbugs have been a problem in the past, apply **Insect & Grub Control** about Memorial Day as a preventative measure.



Houseplants

✓ Check to see if your houseplants are rootbound. Water them thoroughly and carefully remove them from their pots. If the roots have compacted around the outside of the rootball, it is time to repot.

✓ Carefully examine your houseplants for pests and problems. It is much easier to fight an insect infestation, or a disease in it's early stages than when it is out of control.

✓ As the growth rate of your houseplants increase with the seasons, adjust your feeding schedule to provide additional food. Feed your plants a good all purpose houseplant food every 2 weeks. Overuse of fertilizers can cause root and foliage burn, and may kill the plant.



✓ Mist your plants regularly. This increases the humidity, keeps the leaves cleaner and healthier, and helps to prevent some insects such as spider mites.



✓ Move houseplants outdoors for summer by gradually increasing the exposure to sunlight. Fertilize plants to promote summer development. Rotate plants to develop a well-rounded plant. Wash dusty leaves in the shower using room temperature water.

✓ Four to six inch long cuttings are a great way to start new plants. Place the cuttings in potting mix under low light until roots begin to form.

✓ Repot houseplants into a one inch larger diameter pot. It is not good to transplant a small plant into a large pot.

✓ Plant your Amaryllis out in the garden for the summer. Fertilize it often and water it regularly. If the bulb increases in size, the bulb will bloom again next year. If the bulb decreases in size, it may not bloom for another year or two.

✓ Plant your 'florist' hydrangeas and azaleas outside as soon as the weather permits. Do not be discouraged if these blooming plants do not survive well in your garden, the varieties might not be hardy for this area. Buy a hardy hydrangea or a hardy azalea to plant and discard the florist plants.



Miscellaneous

✓ Slugs and snails are out in full force right now. Be sure to take steps to control them now, before they have a chance to reproduce and take over your garden. **Sluggo** is an excellent product to kill slugs and snail without harming dogs, cats, or birds. Cocoa Bean Shell Mulch repels slugs and snails naturally.

✓ The first flowers you will see in your gardens are usually weeds. Prevent or eliminate the weeds (roots and all), before they have a chance to go to seed, or you will be fighting them for years to come. Lightly cultivate soil with a hoe to control weed growth. Apply trellan, preen, casoron, or corn gluten to help prevent weeds.

✓ If the weather refuses to cooperate with your gardening plans, and your seeds have refused to germinate due to cold and wet conditions, replant them ASAP.

✓ Start a compost bin. The compost pile should be kept damp. Frequent turning will turn your garden waste into compost much faster. If the compost is too wet, and stinks, try adding straw or sawdust to absorb the excess moisture.



✓ Keep a garden journal for permanent reference.

Wildbirds

✓ An "average" yard is visited on a regular basis by 15-20 bird species.

✓ Pigeons are the only birds who can drink water like people do, sucking it up against gravity. Other birds must



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continued from page 4

scoop up a mouthful of water, then tilt their heads backward to swallow.

✓ How do I clean feeders?

Thoroughly wash with soap and warm water. Sterilize with a solution of one part bleach to four parts water. Rinse thoroughly.

✓ How do I stop attracting starlings and grackles?

Use a wild bird food that these birds do not like. Foods with corn and milo will attract these birds.

✓ Why do I see only sparrows?

Many people like to feed sparrows. Others prefer not to have sparrows. To avoid sparrows, use foods that do not contain millet, milo or corn.

✓ Will suet get rancid in the summer?

Newly formulated commercial suet and suet dough products will not melt under normal conditions or go rancid. Read the label carefully. Be sure to throw away homemade suet at the first sign that it is rancid.

✓ Buy a new hummingbird feeder, you will start to see some in the area soon. Hummingbirds are attracted to red. Many store-bought hummingbird formulas use red dye to help attract hummingbirds to your feeder. Without the addition of the dye to the hummingbird nectar, the water and sugar will produce a clear nectar.

✓ More and more companies are offering clear hummingbird food as a response to the growing belief that the red dye will harm the hummingbirds. The red dye in the hummingbird food is not necessary to attract hummingbirds. Use a feeder that has red on it, or tie a red ribbon to your feeder, or add some red silk flowers to your feeder to attract hummingbirds.

✓ A hummingbird's heart beats up to 1,260 times per minute and about 250 times per minute at rest.

✓ Hummingbirds need to eat on average 7 times per hour for about 30-60 seconds.

✓ Hummingbirds have no sense of smell.

✓ They eat small soft bugs for protein. Nectar only provides carbohydrates for energy.

✓ A hummingbird's wings will beat about 70 times per second and up to 200 times per second when diving.



✓ Hummingbirds have very weak feet and can barely walk. They prefer to fly, like to perch, spending most of their life perching.

✓ Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly forward, backwards. They can hover in mid-air, fly sideways and even upside-down.

✓ Hummingbirds have tiny hairs on the tip of the tongue to help lap up nectar.

✓ Hummingbirds eat about every ten minutes, slurping down twice their body weight in nectar every day. Most birds eat one quarter to one half their body weight in food daily.

✓ Food has to be available for both the adult butterflies, which sip nectar, and for their caterpillar offspring, which eat plants.

✓ Some of the common nectar plants for butterflies are Aster, Liatris, Coreopsis, Purple Coneflower, and Butterfly Bush.

✓ Most flowering herbs are also popular with butterflies. Try growing many different kinds of plants, so their blooming times vary both in time of day, and in the time of year.

✓ Groups of nectar plants will be easier for butterflies to find than singly planted flowers. As a general landscaping rule, place short species in front and tall ones in back, and clump them by species and color.

✓ As butterflies search for food, they will see large splashes of color more easily than the small points of individual flowers.

✓ Butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, and purple flowers. Avoid the big, showy flowers that are bred for their size because they are often a poor source of nectar, and the butterflies know it.

✓ Like all creatures, butterflies require moisture. They also need the minerals and nutrients they get from mud and muddy water.

