GARDEN TIPS FOR MAY, 2012

by Barbara Lancaster, Somervell County Master Gardener

May is a busy time in the garden. According to Neil Sperry's E-Gardens Newsletter, May is a great time to be planting, pruning and fertilizing.

May is the time to start planting summer vegetables, such as southern peas and melons. It is also a good time to be planting hot weather color from tropical plants, including firebush, croton, mandevilla, hibiscus, pentas, cuphea, and bougainvillea. Summertime color plants, such as Moss rose, purslane, gomphrena, copper plant, zinnias, marigolds, lantana, cosmos, amaranthus can also be planted. Shade loving plants like coleus, begonias, and caladiums should be planted now too. Warm season lawn grasses should be planted. These include St. Augustine, Bermuda, zoysia and buffalograss.

May is also a good time to prune spring flowering shrubs, vines and climbing roses early in May which will allow maximum regrowth. Prune branch by branch which will maintain plants natural shapes. Be sure to "pinch" mums and copper plants to keep the plants shorter and bushier.

Fertilizing should also be started in May. Fertilize turf with an all nitrogen or high nitrogen plant food every 8 to 10 weeks. Ground cover beds, shade trees, evergreen shrubs, spring flowering shrubs and vines can be fertilized with the same fertilizer. Don't forget your container plants. Fertilize them with a diluted complete and balanced analysis plant food with each watering. Time release plants foods are also good for patio pots and hanging baskets.

Also be on the lookout for garden pests, such as cabbage lopers on cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower; lace bugs on sycamores, pyracanthas, azaleas, Boston ivy and others. Control these with a systemic insecticide before the leaves turn tan. A general purpose insecticide offers the best control for spider mites in junipers and other plants. Use a broad leafed weed killer which contains 2, 4-D for non-grassy weeds. Be sure to follow the directions carefully. Webworms in pecan and other trees need to be pruned as soon as you see the webs as sprays are not especially prudent.

SOURCE: Neil Sperry's E-Gardens newsletter, dated April 27, 2012.

Get to Know A Master Gardener

Jenny Reynolds, Somervell County Master Gardener

I was born in Atwater, California, a small farming community, in the middle of San Juaquin Valley. My grandfather, father, and all of my family were farmers. My grandfather raised wine grapes, (we made our own wine) we had an almond orchard, a walnut grove and we farmed the open land in sweet potatoes. We had a large family fruit orchard with peaches, quince, olives, plums oranges, lemons and apricots. My family had a two acre vegetable garden with every vegetable that grows in fertile sandy loam. We all worked on the farm. When I was nine years old I was taught to manage water flow from the canals. I was given a head of water and the responsibility to irrigate an amount of sweet potato rows. Cutting grapes was another thing that I did. I competed with my older cousins and had the bee stings and cuts on my hands from razor sharp knives to prove it. I really hated to lose and didn't very often.

My favorite time of the day was when we went into the fields in the early morning, just at first light, before the heat of the day. Everything smelled just wonderful; you could nearly taste it. I guess I got my love of flowers from my dad. He was different from his brothers.

Their yards were clean and neat with a lawn and some bushes. Our yard was beautiful with roses, carnations, camellias, geraniums, and King Alfred Daffodils. My father, after working all day in the fields, would come home and work in the yard. He said the work in the fields was for our bodies and our lives, but the flowers were for our souls and for God's eyes. Being a daddy's girl, I loved working with him making our garden a glorious place where I could pretend (when I was much too old to be pretending) that I was a fairy princess that lived on the smell of flowers.

When I married and moved to Cleburne, Texas, I was in for a rude awakening. I planted a garden and flowers, but they were not successful. Everything was wrong; the soil, the weather, the type of things I planted. After some advice from my neighbors, I became an OK gardener. I regret that I didn't get cuttings from my father's roses and from our grapevines (they came from Portugal my home land).

I wanted to become a master gardener so that I could continue to improve my skills, and maybe help others to improve their skills as well.

I am very interested in green houses, landscaping and plant propagation. I also would like to work with Jr. Master Gardeners.

I look forward to the time when I retire and can become a full time gardener.

Virginia Tacheira Reynolds

WADE'S WALLYWORM WORD
"H2OLISM"

By Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

Wade greets Wallyworm on a warm afternoon around happy hour "Hello,down there. You look cool in those shades."

"I've got to keep the glare down so that I can see if any birds are near. Dangerous to my health you know. I'm sure you have something to talk about or you would have stayed in the shade." responds WallyWorm

"As a matter of fact I do. Wallyworm, can you grasp the thought that just three atoms allow all of life as we know it to exist? Yep, two small positively charged hydrogen atoms and one large negatively charged atom combine to form a molecule called water, water being the epitome of holism. Holism is a word derived from the Greek word holos , meaning all, entire, or total. Holism is the theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection, such that they cannopt exist independently of the whole." Wade begins

"Water supports all life and is beyond time because it bears in its flow the seeds of the future as well as the memory of the past. Water is found throughout the universe, though seldom as a liquid. Through the ages water was regarded as sacred. Not so much today; just taken for granted. Dynamic water, when it is alive and energized, performs the roles of initiating and operating all the processes of life. Moving, circulating water is energized; still water is effectively dead. Water's principal quality is to bring balance to life. In Chinese tradition, the sun emit's a positive *yang* (masculine) energy and the earth balances this with a negative *yin* (feminine) energy. Water, being an unstable medium, its restlessness stimulates its pulsation and constant swinging between the *yin* and *yang*." continues Wade

"A natural river flowing sinuously recharges its energy towards the positive on a right hand bend and toward the negative on a left hand bend. This constant *yin* and *yang* charges raises the energy level of water so that it can perform its true role in nurturing the enviroment. At a temperature of 37C

(98.4F) water requires a very large input or removal of kinetic energy in order for its temperature to rise or fall, allowing it to keep the blood in the human body at a constant temperature of 37C. Water that has been exposed to harmonious music can produce pure beautiful crystals, while when it is exposed to disruptive energies, it cannot produce fine structures." concludes Wade

"Well, I have probably been educated beyond my intelligence after this happy hour episode." chides WallyWorm

Extracted from holos of an article by Alick Bartholomew in Acres USA

Simple Steps for Landscape Success

By Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener

We all strive for a perfect or at least satisfactory landscape. With the issues we all get to deal with, drought, excessive rain followed by more drought, goofy freezes, etc., being able to keep a decent landscape that makes us happy can seem daunting at times, if not a futile effort. But it need not be so overwhelming.

Whether you have an existing landscape that just needs a little help, are starting from scratch in a new area, or want to completely wipe the slate clean and start over, remembering a few simple steps can make the task at hand far more manageable.

Step 1 - Proper Planning and Design
Consider these four questions before you begin. how? who? when? how much?

> How will the space be used? For active family activities, attracting butterflies/wildlife,etc
> Who will be using the space? Kids, pets, visitors?
> When will the space be used? Seasonally, daily?
> How much time do you want to spend on maintenance?

Answering these questions first will give you the direction for the proper landscape for you.

Step 2 - Soil
Begin with a soil test. This will tell you what you are starting with, what types of amendments you may need and what types of plants are best suited for you.

Step 3 - Turf or lawn area
Before settling on a specific turfgrass, consider the type of traffic (kids, pets, etc.), light exposure and water needs. Be reasonable about how much turf you really need. If the only time you walk on it is when you mow it, maybe you don't need it!

Step 4 - Plant Selection
When choosing plant material, consider what the plant will be at its full size. Don't plant a shrub that will get 5 feet tall, where you only have space for half that. Excessive pruning increases maintenance and reduced plant vigor. Just as with turfgrass, consider light and water requirements as well as pest and disease resistance. It may be that you will determine that using mostly native and adaptive plants will work best for you.

Step 5 - Water availability
No matter your landscape plan, make sure you have enough water to handle the plants. Even native and adapted plants will need water to get established. If city or well water isn't available, maybe you have an opportunity for a rainwater collection system. Be sure to group plantings by their water needs, too.

Step 6 - MULCH
The importance of mulch cannot be stressed enough. Mulches save on water needs, keep soil temperatures regulated, reduce weeds and add valuable nutrients back to the soil as it

decomposes. Keep mulches at least 3-4 inches thick and replenish as needed, generally twice a year - fall and spring.

Step 7 - Maintenance Practices
Keep weeds down so they don’t rob moisture and nutrients from your landscape plants. Inspect irrigation system for leaks. Mow turfgrass to recommended heights and do not bag it.

Source: Go Texan Guide to Landscape Success