

Garden Club

Horticultural Hints

May 2020

You don't have to keep social distance from plants!

(except maybe poison ivy...)



While we can't visit gardens yet, we can take virtual tours like this fly-over of this daffodil field at Tower Hill Botanic Garden

It's unlikely any of us will be visiting any major gardens this month. But you can take a virtual tour from your home at any time. The New York Botanical Garden (<https://www.nybg.org/nybg-at-home/>), for example, provides a continually updated series of video 'walks' through its 250 acres. Tower Hill Botanic Garden (<https://www.towerhillbg.org/online-educational-resources-adults-2/>) offers several virtual tours, including a wonderful drone's-eye 'flyover' of its daffodil fields that you could never take in person. Or, perhaps you'd prefer to go abroad to Monet's garden at Giverny. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjWx2WNXFF4>)



Shasta daisies have more blooms if pinched back

Do you want shorter plants with lots of flowers instead of leggy giants? Pinch back plants like asters and chrysanthemums four times during the spring and early summer. Need an easy mnemonic: pinch them back Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day and the Fourth of July. You'll be glad you did come summer.



If you grow peonies, place peony rings around the plants before they become too big and hard to corral. It's a lot easier to guide the stems of this top-heavy perennial into a ring than to stake individual stalks. After the peony flowers have passed, the rings can be useful keeping other exuberant growers in line later in the summer.



Have you noticed garlic mustard in your yard or along roadways? It is an invasive weed that dominates woodlands and prevents native species useful to wildlife and trees(!) from growing. Don't give garlic mustard a break just because it's an early bloomer. It produces many seeds that stay viable for two years. When you see it, pull it or you'll kept busy for years getting rid of it.



The lady's mantle ringing these daffodils(left) is barely visible in early May. By late June (above) it will hide the daffodil foliage as it yellows

After spring perennial bulb blooms fade, allow foliage to yellow and ‘ripen’ before being removed. This is important because the foliage is responsible for passing nutrients down into the bulb to produce a new flower next year. You can hide the foliage by growing perennials and annuals around it. When the foliage turns brown – likely in June – you can safely cut it at ground level, secure in the knowledge that your favorite spring bulbs are ready for next spring.

It's been a cold wet spring so far, making now a good time to start your vegetable garden. Cold weather crops – lettuce, peas and onions, for example – can be planted now. But many vegetables everyone loves: tomatoes, beans and squash, want soil temperatures of 60 or 70 degrees (or more), which may not appear until June. Lay out your garden and put up a fence now, but delay purchasing pots of tomato, pepper, melon and other hot weather crops until it is closer to the time to set them out. Your garden will be more bountiful for starting at the right time.



Focus on early spring crops like these peas until soil temperatures reach at least 60 degrees



If you apply mulch in your flower beds, remember not to overdo. Two inches of mulch is usually enough to prevent weeds from germinating. Just as important, more mulch isn't better. A too-thick layer (of three or more inches) blocks sunlight and prevents rising temperatures from warming the soil.

A thin layer of mulch helps prevent weeds. Too thick a layer prevents moisture from reaching roots.

Written and created by Betty Sanders. For more horticultural suggestions for March and throughout the year, please visit www.BettyOnGardening.com