

APRIL GROWING- SPRING SEASON

The growing season is seriously upon us-time to start growing! As the season begins, we will get busier and busier. Here are some things to do either IN or FOR the garden.

FINISH CLEANING UP-Finish cleaning out your garden and trimming perennials if you haven't already. Add amendments like compost and lightly turn the soil.

NEXT: ADD SOIL ADMMENDMENTS

You need to be adding soil amendments like compost, rock phosphate, greensand, COMPOSTED old horse manure or composted chicken manure to your bed before planting if you didn't amend your beds in the fall. Instead of rock phosphate and greensand, I've been putting down Azomite every 2 years which is mined from Utah and has those minerals and more minerals and trace elements that plants can benefit from. Dig it in lightly. Prepare your beds now.

Even if it's only a hole, add compost and soil conditioners to it. Now you are ready to plant. Also always add more compost, yum-yum mix, and worm castings if you can get them to bottom of each hole. The idea is each hole where you are transplanting a plant, is highly enriched so it has a good start.

DRIP SYSTEMS-Check your drip systems and timers to make sure they are in good working order BUT do not keep them attached yet because we still can get freezing nights. You'll have to hand water for now.

WEED CONTROL-Two things I do:

1) Use 20-30% vinegar on your weeds. Use a hand sprayer and don't dilute the vinegar, It will kill 95% of weeds but not perennial weeds. Dig those out.

2) I put CORN GLUTEN down in my veggie garden paths. It is a PRE-EMERGENT for controlling weed seeds and is ORGANIC BUT if your weeds are up already, it acts as a fertilizer. (It is very high in nitrogen and that is why it burns the seeds as they germinate but will also feed weeds that are established.

Don't put it on veggie beds where you will be planting any seeds as it will burn any seeds.

START TOMATO SEEDS INSIDE-I start tomato seeds inside under lights and on top of heat mats the last week of March. You can still plant seeds inside in early April but get on it or you'll run out of time when you put them outside as we

have a short growing season. This is if you are going to try to grow your own tomatoes from seeds. That means they will be 6 weeks old by May 15 which is the last freeze date. You can plant them anytime between 5-8 weeks old in wall of waters (WOW). WOWs protect the plants from our cold nites. The nice thing about growing your own tomatoes from seed is that you can try a lot of different varieties of tomatoes that you can't get in the nurseries.

You **NEED WALL OF WATERS TO PROTECT YOUR PLANTS FROM THE COLD NITES**. Transplants plants **after May 15th in wall of waters**. Take off wall of waters when it is warm in June. If you leave them in the wall of waters, you can fry the plants when it gets hot outside. Wall of waters are used as an early aid in getting them out earlier.

If you don't want to try growing tomatoes this year, you can always buy tomato plants and transplant them after May 15 in WOWs or wait a little later after danger of frost.

PEPPERS-Too late to plant by seeds. Instead, plant starts from a nursery but not till first week of June. Agua Fria probably has the largest selection of peppers and tomatoes but neither are ready yet. But swing by and see what they got growing and when they will be ready to sell.

EGGPLANTS- Too late to plant by seeds. Instead, plant starts from a nursery but do not put them in ground till first week of June.

PLANT THESE CROPS by SEEDS in April-water 2x a day

Beet seeds- Each seed is a couple of plants so when they pop up, keep the strongest one and cut the rest off. Plant about 1 1/2 inch deep. Thin out every 3 inches after germination.

Kale- A biennial plant that lasts 2 years. Put in now by plants or seeds- great crop that won't bolt in summer. It is a biennial-lives approximately 2 years-that means it puts it's energy into leaf production the first year and to seed production the second year. Thin out to every 6 inches. I use both kale and chard as annuals because they put most of their energy into creating flowers and seeds the second year and I want more leaves.

Chard- Another biennial plant that lasts 2 years. Transplant plants or plant by seeds. It also won't bolt in summer. Thin spacing to every 6 inches.

Carrots- Plant very shallow-sprinkle in roughed up soil, sprinkle sand over them to cover them and put medium weight row cover over them. Water

right thru row cover. it will hold the seeds in place till germination. Water 2x a day. Thin out to every 2 inches. don't put nitrogen in your carrot bed-it will create 'hairy' carrots.

Here are some issues with carrots

1. Planting too early. If the soil is too cold, carrots will just sit there and wait for the soil to warm or they could rot. You might need to replant. Carrots need the soil temperature to be at LEAST 55°F to germinate. Get a compost thermometer and put it in the ground about 4 inches to see what the temperature is.
2. Carrots are heavy feeders and need fresh amendments each year but not too much nitrogen. Too much nitrogen will make 'hairy carrots' which are carrots with roots coming out everywhere giving the carrot a 'hairy' look.
3. Haven't watered enough. *This is the number one problem.* Every other day is NOT enough. Water 1-2x a day till they germinate then cut back to 1x a day. Watering should be consistent to keep soil EVENLY moist.
4. Cover with row cover to keep critters out till they are a few inches high. Thin out so they have spacing-I use two fingers distance between carrots so they can get big enough when thinning.

OTHER CROPS TO PLANT

Potatoes-Plant potatoes in April- Get potato seeds (they are little potatoes) from the local nurseries, not from the grocery store-sometimes they have been sprayed so not to sprout. Dig a trench 10 inches deep and space them 12 inches apart cover the potato seeds with about 3-4 inches of soil and as they grow cover them (leaves and all with soil) till the trench is filled. Then keep piling on the dirt. The tubers will grow between the potato seeds and the top of the ground.

Onions-Go to a nursery to get the correct day length onion BULBS for our area. We can grow **short-day or intermediate-day onion sets**. Not long-day onions which are grown further north. Long day onions will not ripen in time. Get the bulbs & plant with the tops 1" below the surface. It is too late to plant onions from seeds-that would have been inside under lights in February.

Garlic-plant the biggest cloves and do not take the skin off. Plant 6 inches apart plant, pointed side up about 3 inches deep and cover with soil. Add

straw in trough to help retain water.

Shallots- Plant one shallot every 6 inches leave top of shallot showing just a little bit. Do not plant deep. Add straw in trough to help retain water.

PERRENIAL FRUIT

Plant strawberries, blackberries and raspberries in late spring from. Either order canes online or check with our nurseries to see if they are carrying them. Water regularly. They will grow back each year. Start harvesting 2 years later.

Strawberries-I have June bearing strawberries which bear fruit in June vs everbearing strawberries which produce fruit all season.

Blackberries-I have Triple-Crown blackberries which is a thornless blackberry. They do great here. Takes about 3 years to produce fruit.

Raspberries-I grow 'Polana' fall bearing variety which do fantastic here. I got my canes online.

Grapes-I have Himrod grape-a table eating seedless green grape that is wonderfully sweet, drought resistant when established and delicious and survives our winters and is drought resistant.

Rhubarb-I grow Victoria which has produced well for years. It is not bright red but is green with red streaks.