

April 2020

# garden time

A Digital Monthly Magazine for Your Garden & Home

## The New Normal How to Shop at Your Local Garden Center

Sam Kitchel prepares an order for curbside pickup at Tsugawa Nursery in Woodland, Washington.

**Ficus Lyrata**

**Choosing Deck Furniture**

CREATIVE GARDEN SPACES'  
**Debbie Brooks**

**A New Date for  
GardenPalooza**  
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# Happy Birthday!

Nope, we are not celebrating a special day, though I did have a big birthday in March. We are just trying to be safe. Covid-19, or Coronavirus is raging and experts have us all reassessing our lifestyles and interactions with our friends and family. They say that you should sing 'Happy Birthday' twice while you are washing your hands to make sure to not spread the virus to others and as I write this we are all trying to stay healthy and happy on our own little, individual, islands of health. This outbreak has led to a lot of changes. For garden centers it has meant modified hours and procedures. For the Garden Time crew it means that we are limiting our interactions with people and not taping new stories at this time. So you will be seeing a lot of repeat stories for a few weeks. Personally, we are maintaining safe distances and washing our hands often. We also know that we are providing a service to the viewer and reader by providing great gardening information. Gardening has been proven in many studies to reduce stress and is part of a healthy lifestyle for many people. There is an added benefit to working in the soil... you are less likely to touch your nose and face if you have been digging in compost and manure all day!

I mentioned that garden centers are modifying hours and have new protective policies in place. Most of them are allowed to remain open because they sell fruit and vegetable plants. Because of this people are starting to get back into their gardens and rediscovering the joys of gardening and growing their own food. In this month's issue I'll fill you in on how you can still shop your local garden center without exposing yourself to the coronavirus.

Also this month we learn about growing corn from Ryan. Growing corn seems like it would be easy, but if you've tried it and had a poor harvest Ryan will help you become successful. If you are thinking about spending more time on your deck this year and travel less, you might be considering purchasing a new set of patio furniture, but what do you look for in a patio set? We have a story that will run you through the basics. We also introduce you to one of the most popular indoor plants, the Ficus lyrata or Fiddle Leaf Fig. This is one tropical that can make a statement in your home year round and we'll show you how to help it thrive.

We hope that you and your family are staying safe and healthy. Remember to get out into your garden and enjoy the nature in your own backyard.

## Happy Gardening!

**Jeff Gustin, Publisher**

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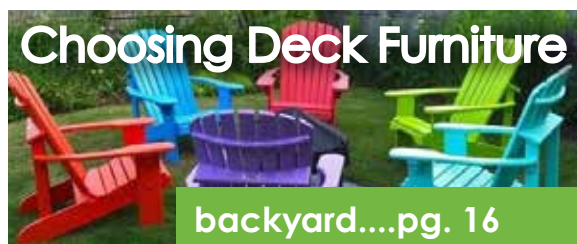
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# Garden Time's Iconic Spokesflower Answers Your Questions!



## Ask Mortimer

Dear Mortimer,

My plants are really looking pretty sad. I added fertilizer, but they are still looking weak. If my plant is dying do I need to add more fertilizer?

Your friend,  
Mark

Dear Mark,

Adding fertilizer doesn't always cure all plant ills. Understand that there could be lots of reasons for your plant to look poorly. Let's start with the first one, the weather. If your plant needed a boost sometimes a dose of fertilizer might snap it out of it, but this time of year the temperature, especially the soil temps, may be too cold for the plant to effectively use whatever you are feeding it. A plant needs to be actively growing to take up nutrients that it can use. Wait for a couple weeks to a month to see if your application of fertilizer works.

There could be other reasons why your plant is not responding. There could be insect problems, root damage, water or soil problems. Some insects can sap the strength of your plants and you may not know it. Check the leaves with a magnifying glass for damage, even under the leaves. Then look at the stems and trunk of your plant. Do you see damage or chewing? Just a couple years ago



Knowing ahead of time if your plant needs fertilizer will save time and money.

Mortimer answers selected questions and comments every month in Garden Time Magazine. To send him your question, email [AskMortimer@GardenTime.tv](mailto:AskMortimer@GardenTime.tv)

PHOTO CREDIT: OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE





Fertilizer burn on a potted plant.

we thought our clematis was dying and it was slugs chomping at the base of the plants. Root damage could also be a culprit. Damaged roots hinder a plants ability to bring nutrients up from the ground. Lightly dig around the base of the plant and see if there is any damage to the roots. Are there tiny finger roots visible? They are the tiny hair-like roots. They should be white for most plants. Are the roots bound and twisted around the trunk? Those are some root issues. Is there too much water or not enough? Over or under watering can stress out a plant. Different plants have different watering needs. Make sure that your plant is getting the right amount of water to thrive. Finally, the soil. If you haven't done a soil test, do one. The test will tell you what the plant is working with and from that you can determine what, if any amendments your plant may need. Just like the water needs, different plants need different nutrients. Take some time and do a little homework to determine what your plant needs and you'll both be happy.

Of course, you can always check with your local OSU Extension agent or office to get more of your questions answered.

Good Luck,  
Mortimer

• • • • •

Dear Mortimer,

I want tulips and other spring flowers in my garden, is it too late to plant bulbs?

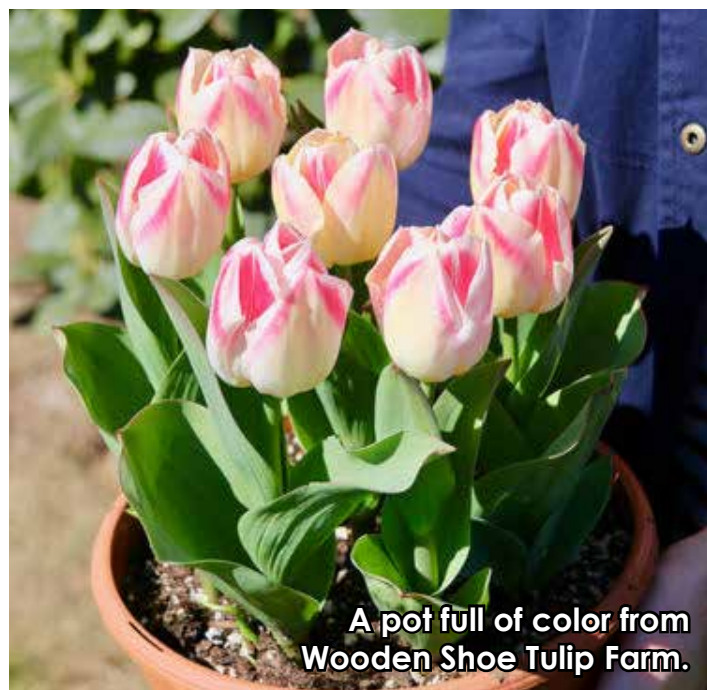
Signed,  
Longing for Color

Dear Color,

Yes, it is a little late to get bulbs in the ground and hope that they will grow and bloom any time soon. Fall is the best time to plant those bulbs in the ground for that wonderful spring color. However, there is one way to get splash-es of color throughout your garden, pots. I'm not talk about placing containers on your deck; I'm talking about planting containers full of blooms right into the soil of your garden. Right now garden centers have pots full of tulips and other spring favorites blooming. Just take a pot home and dig a hole in your garden bed and drop the whole container in the hole. Once the bloom is gone you can just pull the pot out and replace it with another container of color or just fill in the hole. You can also just plant the bulbs back into the same hole (or wait until fall to do that), so you can have that great color return next spring.

Right now the Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm is offering pots full of color. They had to cancel their annual tulip festival so you can't wander the fields of blooms, but they do have pots of color that you can take home. Just check out their website, or stop by their farm market, to pick some up.

Colorfully yours,  
Mortimer



A pot full of color from  
Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm.





JUNE  
27

PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH RAE PHOTOGRAPHY

# A New Date for a Spring Favorite

**Reacting to a national need for caution and unity,  
GardenPalooza transplants itself into a June berth.**

**by Therese Gustin**

Normally our April adventure features our GardenPalooza event. This year's event was to take place on Saturday, April 4, 2020 at Fir Point Farms from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm. Since the event puts people in close quarters even though it takes place outside, it means that we will be cancelling GardenPalooza for April 4th, due to the large amount of people that attend our event. We are sorry that this is happening, but we understand that the health and safety of everyone is paramount.

Through this uncertainty there is one thing that rings true. Spring is here! The weather is improving and being out in your garden is healthy and therapeutic! We at Garden Time and Garden Time magazine encourage you to check with your independent garden centers: see if they are open, have a "take-out" service or have delivery services. Many have an online presence and are getting very creative in their business plans so that those of you who want to beautify your gardens with trees, shrubs and flowers have the ability to do so.

As we spend more time at home during this wait, let's take this opportunity to spend time in our gardens. Teach your children about plants, start some vegetable or flower seeds, pick some weeds, watch the birds, and enjoy Nature's abundance!

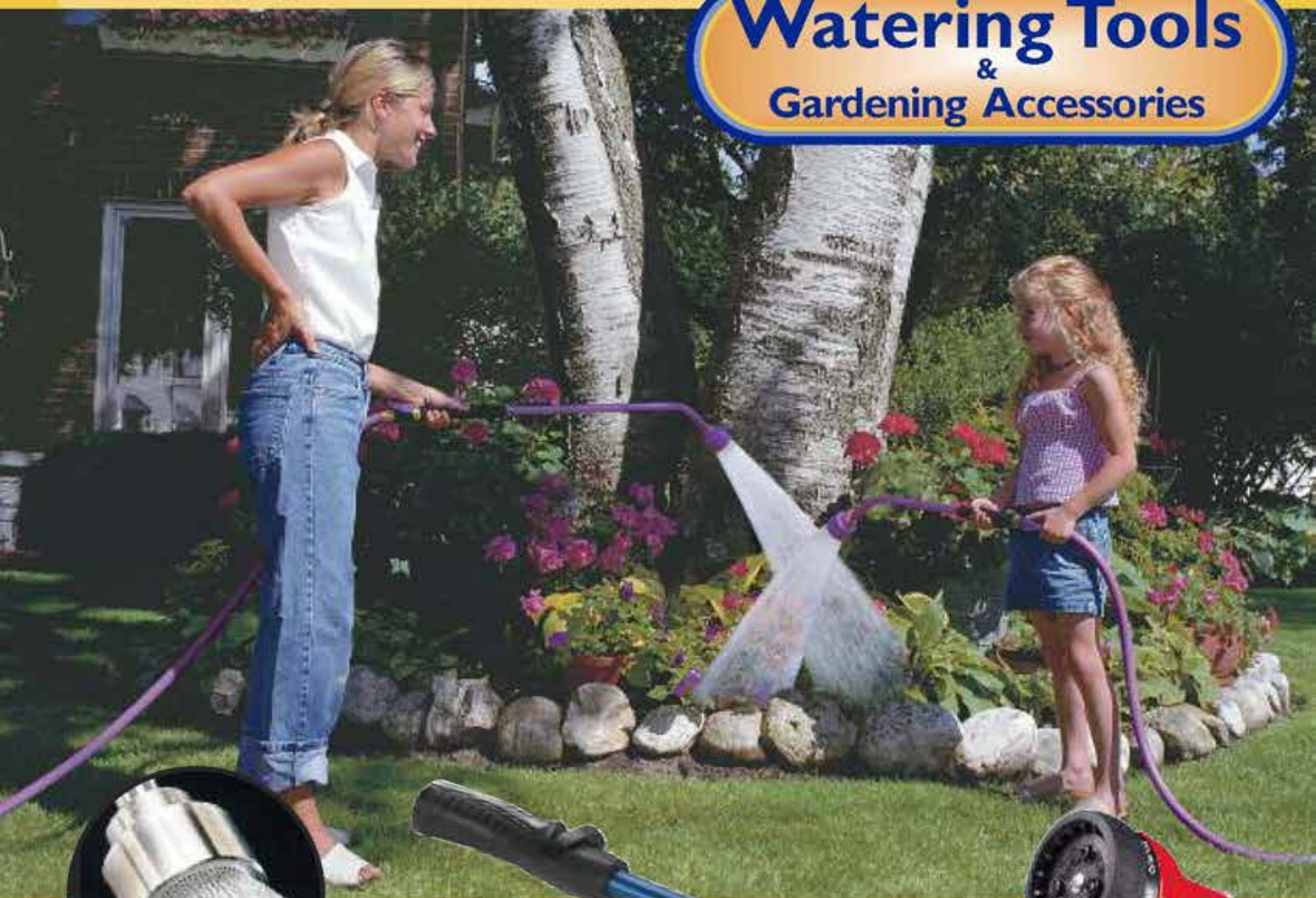
At this moment, we are planning to reschedule GardenPalooza for Saturday, June 27, 2020 at Fir Point Farms from 8:00 am to 3:30pm. There may be a different mix of plants at that time and it may look a little different but we're sure there will be plenty of beautiful plants and garden art available to enhance your garden.

In the meantime, stay safe and healthy, practice good hygiene, spend quality time with your families, take walks if you can and enjoy your gardens. You can always go to [www.GardenTime.tv](http://www.GardenTime.tv) to watch any stories in the archives. And check the GardenPalooza website for any updates.



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# The New Normal

**As more of us are sheltering at home and practicing "social distancing," nurseries adapt to keep us safe and allow us to shop in a time of uncertainty.**

**by Jeff Gustin**

The covid-19 or Coronavirus has been in the news a lot lately. In Oregon, Washington and Idaho we are all under a 'Shelter in Place' or 'Stay at Home' order. A lot of your local nurseries and garden centers in Oregon and Wash-

ington are still open as essential businesses because they can provide you with vegetable starts and fruit plants, but how do you shop your local garden centers during this crazy time?





The pick-up area at Shorty's.

For this month's adventure we want to cover the different ways you can still shop for your favorite garden plants and supplies.

All garden centers that have remained open have modified their hours and procedures for customers to help maintain safe and clean stores during the coronavirus situation. To always learn more about the procedures that may be in place at your local nursery, check their website!

Here are some of the services that your local garden center may offer.

If you would like to order garden plants and sup-



Curbside pick-up at a garden center.

# Where Will a Capitol Subaru Take You?



## Local Events April 2020

Due to venue closures imposed by state and local governments, many gardening-related events have been cancelled or postponed. We encourage you to visit the websites of the nurseries or organizations sponsoring specific events to make sure you are reading the most accurate and up-to-date information.

If you are sheltering at home and feeling shut in, one remedy might be to take a short trip in your car. Even a drive around your neighborhood will allow you to see the spring flowers in bloom and get a little fresh air while still following the "social distancing" guidelines that are so vital in reducing the spread of Coronavirus.

We encourage you to obey the restrictions of your locality while enjoying the outdoors and the beauty that spring has to offer. Stay healthy!





plies online, a lot of garden centers are taking orders through email or by phone. Check out your local nurseries website, Instagram or Facebook page to see what they have to offer right now. A lot of them are posting pictures of plants that are available. Then you email or call them with a list of the plants you would like to purchase. For most of them, you can even pay by credit card over the phone. Don't forget to order extra soil or other garden products at the same time as you make your plant purchase. This will eliminate extra trips to get the things that you need. If you have ordered on-line, some nurseries are offering curbside pick-up. Just call them when you arrive at the nursery to let them know you are there and they will bring your plants out to you. Other nurseries are offering free delivery in a limited area, though some orders may need a minimum purchase to qualify. Please be patient with the nursery as they may have many deliveries to make and it could take a little time to get to your home.

If you feel sick at all, please use the delivery service option to avoid contact with people.

If you are headed to your favorite garden center be aware that policies have changed there too. Social distancing rules are being strictly enforced. Some nurseries may ask you to leave if you are not following their guidelines. Always follow the instructions of nursery staff. Some places have limited hours or other special considerations, check their websites. Be aware that all nurseries have adopted comprehensive cleaning procedures, but still be careful of 'high-touch' surfaces. Most garden centers are wiping down surfaces frequently and doing deep cleaning, but bring disinfectant wipes or hand sanitizer with you to use on carts and your hands as your shop.

The main thing is that your local garden center wants you to be safe and healthy as you garden this spring.



Plants listed on the Egan Gardens Facebook page.

PHOTO CREDIT: EGAN GARDENS



Plants listed on the Egan Gardens Facebook page.

PHOTO CREDIT: EGAN GARDENS



Some nurseries will put your pick-up order in your trunk.

PHOTO CREDIT: FINE GARDENING



Spacing marks in the checkout line at Egan Gardens demonstrate "social distancing."

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# Just Fiddling Around

If you have a bright spot in your home, the Fiddle Leaf Fig can be a bright spot in your roster of indoor plants.

by Therese Gustin



Looking to add drama to your home or office décor? Many houseplants can fill the bill, but one that particularly stands out is the *Ficus lyrata* or Fiddle Leaf Fig. This large glossy leaved tree can add sculpture to your living space.

Native to western Africa from Cameroon to Sierra Leone, *Ficus lyrata* grows in lowland tropical rainforests. In nature it can grow to over 40 feet tall. Here in the Pacific Northwest however, we use it as a houseplant. What makes it so distinctive is its large, glossy, deeply veined violin-shaped leaves that can grow upwards of 10 inches in length. The plant itself can easily grow to six feet or more in a home environment.

Some people say *Ficus* can be touchy and tend to drop leaves. Fiddle leaf figs can be a bit more forgiving if located in the proper place. Location is important to help your *Ficus lyrata* thrive. They like A LOT of bright indirect light and prefer to be away from drafty areas, so try not to place it near an outside door or right over a heating vent. Once you've found the ideal spot, try not to move your plant. Moving your *Ficus* may cause some leaf drop as it tries to acclimate to its new spot. Turning your fiddle leaf fig slightly each time you water it helps it grow more evenly so one side doesn't try to grow towards the light source. Again, this is a houseplant that will thrive only in a







Overwatering damage on leaves.

bright location!

*Ficus lyrata* loves to stay evenly moist. One of the easiest things to do is to overwater your fiddle leaf fig. Water every 7 to 10 days. You can check if the plant needs water by inserting your index finger a couple of inches into the pot. If it's dry, it's time to water. Don't let the pot sit in water for long periods of time as this can cause root rot. Symptoms of overwatering show up as brown spots on the leaves. If you find some of your leaves turning brown, check to see if your soil is very wet. You may have to place your plant on its side, take it out of the pot and check if the roots are rotting. Rotting roots are gray or brown and mushy. Healthy roots are firm and white. Pruning out the rotted roots and spotted leaves and adding new potting soil can hopefully revive your plant. Just be sure to refrain from overwatering again.

If you would like, you can fertilize your fig once a month in the spring and summer with a general houseplant fertilizer. Check the label for the recommended amount. It's not necessary to fertilize in the fall and winter when the plant is dormant. It's time for a new pot when the roots start growing out of the bottom of the pot or the plant looks too big for its pot, usually once every one or two years. When looking to repot, choose a pot about two inches wider than the current pot. Remove



the plant, knock off some soil and check for any rotted roots. Cut off the rotted roots, loosen the roots and place the fig into its new pot with some fresh potting soil in the bottom. Be sure not to bury it any deeper than it was before. Add fresh potting soil around the root ball and water as usual. Leave about an inch between the soil and the lip of the pot for watering purposes.

To keep the leaves of the fiddle leaf fig looking glossy, about once a month use a damp cloth to wipe away any dust and shine the leaves. This is also a good time to check for any insect pests. If you find any, check with your local independent garden center for the proper pest control.

You may have seen two forms of fiddle leaf figs; the tall tree-form type with a long bare trunk and the shorter bushier type with leaves all the way down to the base of the plant. They are both forms of *Ficus lyrata*. Some people remove the bottom leaves to encourage their fig to grow into a tree form. Some people prefer to leave the bottom leaves on for that bushier shape.

Whatever shape you prefer, if you have that perfect bright spot to fill, check out the houseplant section of your favorite independent garden center and add a stately fiddle leaf fig to your home or office!







Deck furniture on display at Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood.

# The 'Other' Living Room

**This is the season when the outdoors becomes our second home and there's a style of furniture to fit any taste.**

**by Jeff Gustin**



**Villa Bianca Collection**





With all the uncertainty in the world these days, faraway dream destinations are fading and people are looking for ways to 'staycation' in their own backyards. While we all long to relax, the needs for style, durability and budget all need to be met. In deck or patio furniture the phrase 'you get what you pay for' applies to all three. Before you head out to make a purchase there are a few questions you have to answer.

Ask yourself, how do you spend your time on your patio? Are you a solo lounge, or a party animal? Do you just relax or do you dine alfresco (outdoors in the open air)? Are you a couple or a family?

What is your space that you are utilizing? You want to make sure that you have room for your furniture and your guests to fit comfortably.

What is your style? Are you a modernist, a traditionalist, a little crazy and eclectic?

Finally, what is your budget? How long do you want your patio pieces to last? Can your new set be changed or modified to go with changes in style.

To answer all these questions I contacted a couple of experts in furniture, Teri at AI's Home and Garden, and Diana at Terra Casa.

First we talked about how you spend your

time on the patio. If you like to have large groups of people and enjoy large meals with friends and family, you need to think about space. You want to have lots of room for you and your guests to move around. If you have a small area and are trying to do too much, your space could be gone quickly with too many pieces. Combination pieces may work better here. These are pieces that serve dual functions of relaxed seating and then also combine with a table for comfortable dining. Knowing your measurements makes all the difference. As Teri said 'measure, measure, measure'! Know your space and buying gets a lot easier. The large group/small group ideas also apply to fabrics and construction. Diana said to look for quality construction. Frames need to be strong and well manufactured. Have you ever been to a party and seen a piece of lawn furniture fail. I have, twice! Once was a cheap aluminum chair when I was young, and later in life I saw the leg of a plastic chair break, that left a grown adult sprawled out on the ground. Frames should have solid joints and good welds. Fabrics should be designed for outdoors and have good seams to prevent tearing. Some fabrics are specifically designed for outdoor sun exposure with UV protection, water and stain resistance woven in. Quality furniture means quality time with family and friends.

Creating quality time is not just limited to the





Pillows add color...



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Quality welds mean stronger furniture.

type of furniture you choose. There are lots of ways to enhance your enjoyment and lengthen your time on your deck. Fire pits, whether a stand-alone unit or as part of a table can take the chill off the evening and create warmth directly and visually. Outdoor lighting can bring a new element into your decorating. In fact, some of the newer patio umbrellas come with lights built in that are powered by a rechargeable battery.

Style is also a consideration for a lot of families. Teri recommends that you try to bring your inside, outside. She means that you bring the same design styles from your indoor setting to your outdoor style. If you do this you can possibly pick pieces that can be outdoors in the summer and then used indoors during the winter. If you can't do this with large pieces you can do this with accessories like pillows, area rugs, pottery and umbrellas. These accessories can also bring a 'pop' to your outdoor decorating and can be easily changed if styles change. The styles to choose from are tremendous. Finding something that fits your patio and your tastes shouldn't be too hard. We found a bunch of different styles at the AI's in Sherwood, plus, through their suppliers, and their catalogs you had even more choices!

Don't forget your plants when you accessorize. Tropical plants in containers can take your guests to a different place when you use them in your decorating. Even a few smaller pots with faux suc-





Nathan Collection

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culents can add just the right touch to your patio set.

One of the styles of furniture is the very colorful hard plastic Adirondack chairs that are on the market. As Diana, from Terra Casa pointed out, these are heavy (they will never blow away!), durable pieces made from recycled plastic so you can also feel like you're doing your part to eliminate plastic waste.

Budget is a huge consideration for a lot of people. When our children were little, we bought an expensive (for us) table and chairs. About 30 years later, those pieces are still used practically every day during the summer. We've replaced the cushions once and the umbrella twice. This was a balance between durability and budget for us and we've never regretted our decision! Plus, the benefit to a lot of these quality constructed pieces is that they may also come with a warranty! This longevity means that you have to think about where you will be in years down the road. Are these pieces stylish enough to weather the changes that you and your family will go through?



The final thing that Teri recommended is to try before you buy! If you aren't comfortable with the piece after trying it for a short time, you probably won't love it in a couple years!

So this summer, make that 'staycation' memorable and comfortable at the same time with some quality outdoor furniture.

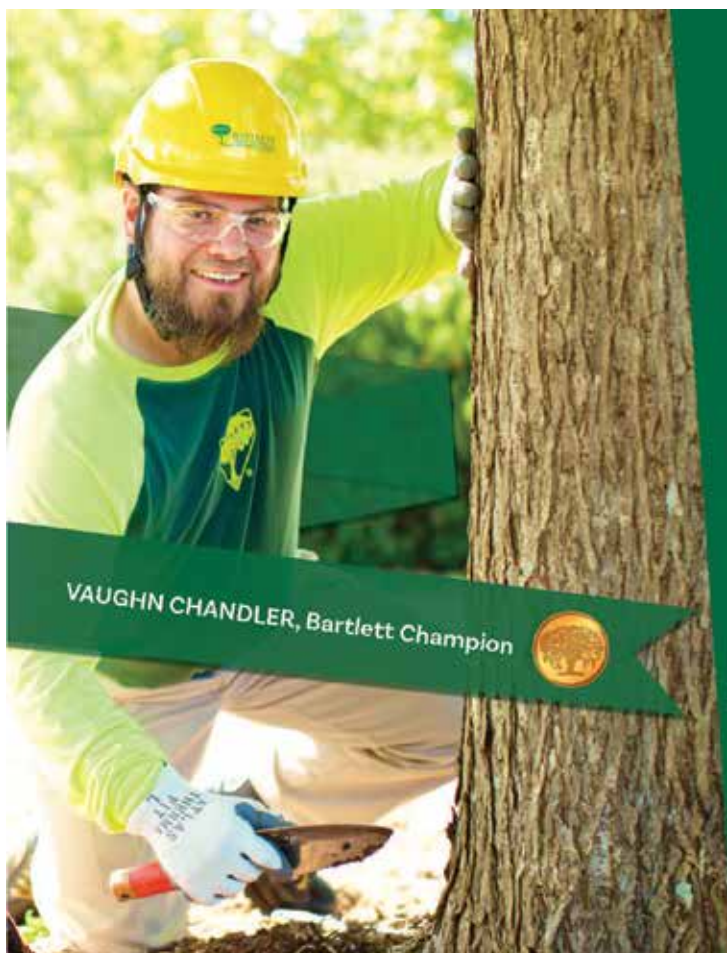


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# Stalk of the Town

Planting and  
harvesting fresh  
corn is a great  
way to enjoy  
this beloved  
vegetable.

by Ryan Seely

PHOTO CREDIT: ZPHAD1 VIA FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

Nothing says summer like taking a bite off a fresh ear of sweet corn! Those warm, sunny summer days filled with picnics, BBQs, and parties, complete with corn as the star of relaxing summertime meals. Certainly, corn can be found at most grocery stores, farmers markets and roadside stands, but growing your own is achievable for many home gardeners.

Thought to only grow in warm climates with a long growing season, corn can actually be grown in the Pacific Northwest. To successfully grow in your own garden, there are a few basics you will want to follow. Choosing the correct location, encouraging ideal soil conditions, selecting specific seed varieties and regular basic plant care ensure you can enjoy a long abundant summer harvest:

- **Location:** Corn is not overly picky about the type of soil it requires, but

it does require a fertile soil high in nutrients and a pH between 6 and 7. To achieve the required PH balance, a little lime mixed into the soil may be necessary. It requires full sun and well-drained soil. Because corn is pollinated by the wind, planting in several shorter rows will yield better results than planting in one long row.

- **Seed Selection:** There are three main types of sweet corn, which are categorized by the amount of sugars in their kernels: Standard (su), Sugar Enhanced (se), and Supersweet (sh2). There are many varieties in each type, but for the Pacific Northwest it is generally harder to grow the Supersweet varieties as they tend to require a longer growing season and the seed doesn't germinate well in wet cold soils native to Oregon and Washington. You can choose varieties based on color and sweetness, but





also by days of maturity. A good tip if you have room in your garden is to select two or three different types with different maturities. This will allow you to stagger the crops so they don't all ripen at the same time and to give you a longer harvest. You are able to plant Standard and Sugar Enhanced varieties together, but if you try to mix in a Super-sweet variety, you have to worry about cross pollination between the different types. It is also important to choose a good quality seed that is grown or chosen for the Pacific Northwest. There are several quality local seed companies to choose from. Most local garden centers will carry the seed or you can order them online directly from the seed company.

- **Planting:** Corn requires soil temperatures to be 60 degrees or higher to germinate. If you are directly sowing seeds in the ground, you will need to wait for the soil to be warmer. You can start the seeds earlier inside a greenhouse and then transplant outside after the soil warms and the danger of frost is over. To sow directly in the ground, make a trench about six inches deep, sprinkle with a granular fertilizer and a layer of soil, then



plant the seeds about three inches apart. After the seeds have germinated and sprouted up to about four to five inches tall, you can thin out the plants to about eight inches apart. If transplanting from starts, you can directly plant into the warmer soil every eight inches.

- **Care:** Since corn is a large growing plant, it requires lots of fertilizer high in nitrogen to get the plant up to size. Once your plants reach about eight inches tall, you will want to start fertilizing regularly. You can either use a granular fertilizer down the side of the rows or a liquid foliar fertilizer. Continue feeding throughout the growing season about every two weeks to ensure the plants reach a mature size and have enough energy to support fruit production. Watering is also essential. Corn requires a substantial amount of water to support the growth, but does need a well-drained soil to prevent rotting. It is best to deep water at the base of the plant and to avoid overhead watering if possible, especially when it gets

close to when the tassels start to drop their pollen. If overhead watering is used during this time, pollination may be reduced. Keep the rows weeded to help ensure that the nutrients and water are going to the plant, and not the weeds.

- **Pest/Disease:** The moth of a corn ear worm will lay its eggs in the silk. After it hatches it can travel into the ear of corn where it will feed on the kernels. You can treat this by using a Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) product. You may also find a specific insect, the corn borer, that will bore a hole into the side of the ear through the leaf. An insecticide, pyrethrin, can be used to help eliminate these pests.
- **Harvesting:** It will be time to harvest when the silk on the end of the ear starts to turn brown. You can also feel the end of the ear without having to pull back the husk. If it is rounded, the kernels have formed all the way to the end and it is time to harvest. If it is pointed, you can wait a bit longer for the ear to fully mature.



PHOTO CREDIT: TIMLEWISNM VIA FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS





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# Ryan's Corn Salad



6 Ears Corn, Husked

1/3 Cup Crema (Can Substitute Sour Cream)

4 Tablespoons Fresh Lime Juice

1/2 Teaspoon Ground Cumin

3/4 Teaspoon Smoked Paprika

1/2 Teaspoon Chili Powder

1/4 Teaspoon Black Pepper

1/4 Teaspoon Salt, Plus More To Taste

1/2 Cup Crumbled Cotija Cheese

1/2 Red Onion, Minced

1/2 Bunch Cilantro, Chopped

1. Heat grill to medium heat. Add the corn, turning occasionally until slightly charred on each side.
2. Remove from grill and allow to cool for several minutes.
3. Holding the corn by the small end, cut off all of the kernels.
4. Place the kernels in a big bowl and add all remaining ingredients.
5. Fold gently with a rubber spatula, seasoning with additional salt as needed.
6. Serve slightly warm or room temperature.

Cooking and Storing: Corn is so versatile and an excellent source of starch! From corn on the cob (either lightly boiled or grilled), salsa, salads, and breads, there are so many ways to use this hearty vegetable. And while we all love the harvest of Summer, those of us with children will likely hear the phrase "Corn again for dinner?" Not to worry, corn is easily storable in the freezer. You can freeze on the cob, off the cob, uncooked or cooked. I personally enjoy freezing corn, off the cob, in quart-sized freezer bags. If you choose to not blanch corn, then be aware that the corn is best used in soups or breads and not as the base for a corn salad or salsa. If you are using corn as the main ingredient in a dish, I would recommend blanching quickly (five to six minutes on the cob) then immediately submersing in an ice bath. Dry thoroughly, then freeze either on or off the cob. Frozen corn will keep in the freezer for up to twelve months.



To harvest, simply break the ear from the stalk by hand or carefully with a knife as to not damage the stalk. You can use the corn immediately or leave in its husk in a cool dry area until it is time to cook. On the previous page you'll find one of my family's favorite recipes for a fresh corn salad.

Planting and harvesting fresh corn is fun and rewarding, with a bounty of corn available during not only the Summer months, but also Winter as well. Take these tips to heart, and you will be rewarded with an amazing bounty. Happy gardening!



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# Turning an Itch into a Niche

**Landscape designer  
Debbie Brooks has  
found her place  
in the garden.**

**by Judy Alleruzzo**

**Debbie Brooks and Rick Snyder**





Our April "Hortie of the Month" is Debbie Brooks, a local landscape designer who creates amazing landscapes through her business, Creative Garden Spaces. She has designed gardens in a few different states which means different climate zones with a different palette of plants. She knows a lot of plants and how to use them for client projects and for display gardens!

Gathering her 35 years of designing with plants, Debbie created a showcase garden for the Spring Home & Garden Show in February 2020. It was one of 14 featured gardens in this late winter event.

The theme of the featured gardens was "Hot Summer Nights". Debbie chose an urban living design and named it 'Paved Paradise'.

She teamed up with her husband, Rick Snyder from Cornerstone Outdoor Life. He specializes in hardscapes and is the perfect creative partner to help realize Debbie's design.

Among the plants used were several different species of conifers with Heucheras and blooming Hel-lebores added in as color spots. Water was used effectively by featuring it as 'rainwater' falling off the living area roof to a side yard rill. Pathways were made of different textures from stepping-stones and pavers in the lawn to a curving path of cobblestones. Debbie designed two covered areas, one was a dining area complete with twigs woven into the ceiling of the structure and the other area was a stone fireplace surrounded by comfy seating. She created a natural material shadow box using more twigs to echo the twigs in the dining room structure. The back of the shadow box was painted orange with interior lighting which enhanced the glow to the scene. Very clever focal point to this unique urban landscape. So, now you know what Debbie is designing these days, I'll give you a bit of her background. Debbie grew up in California and had a small vegetable and flower garden beneath her bedroom window.

She loved marigolds back then and she still does today, and she also loves Artichokes. Her family took camping vacations and even today is an outdoors person. (You can see that in her designs.) Debbie attended Edmunds Community College in Seattle and studied Horticulture and Landscape Design. She's a self-proclaimed "science nerd" and loved her Botany classes.

Getting the itch to design gardens and landscapes, she worked with an instructor who was also a landscape contractor/installer. She was able to put all that new knowledge to work very quickly!

Over the next years she worked as a designer in California and St Paul Minnesota. Of course,

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a bit of different plant material available for those diverse climates, but Debbie is a plant nerd and figured out plants to make beautiful gardens. Debbie moved to Oregon and worked as a sales rep for Teufel's in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, learning about the area's plants and designing on the side. She met her husband Rick Snyder at a trade show where he was gathering information to start up his hardscape business. They have a double partnership in life and work, as seen in the many projects they do as a team.

Speaking of designing and installing gardens and landscapes, I asked how does this all get put together to make a client happy?

My job is to "Give options" and "build a relationship. It's my job to find out what the client wants to achieve and how to get there." It sounds like she just doesn't meet with clients once but has many conversations with them and asks questions like....

"Do they want a vegetable garden?

Do they have kids and pets?

Do they want a low maintenance design? I recommend dwarf plants that grow slowly."

Debbie tours the client's home to see what kind of style they like, eclectic or traditional and what is the color palette?

She also educates her clients and reassures them they really don't have a "Brown Thumb" to maintain a new garden.

She is conscious of client budgets and works to keep it in mind when choosing hardscaping and plant material.

If they are DIYers, she gives soil prep recommendations and a maintenance outline including schedules for fertilizing, prun-







ing and general plant care for the new landscape. Debbie is a busy designer and is working on a large residential project with lots of hardscaping, a pool, giant outdoor living area with a kitchen and fireplace. She has another design on her drawing board to create a small landscape for the front of a home. Debbie had worked with this client about eight years ago when she designed their backyard.

When designing, Debbie makes sure she chooses an assortment of plants with year-round interest. She told me several of her favorite plants that she and her clients love.



- 'Kaleidoscope' Abelia - LOVES IT!

Variegated foliage, pretty flowers, good habit, not a fussy shrub

- 'Jim's Pride' and 'Summer Ice' Daphne

Not as picky as Daphne odora, evergreen foliage, fragrant flowers on and off through the summer

- Hydrangeas & Viburnums - LOVES THEM!

- Acer 'Sango Kaku' Coral Bark Maple

- Hellebores

- Hardy Geraniums



Debbie is a past president of the ANLD, Association of Northwest Landscape Designers and this year she is on the Garden Tour committee that organizes the annual showcase of member designers and contractors. Over the past few years, Garden Time has interviewed many of the designers and homeowners involved in the ANLD Tour.

It is an amazing tour to attend to get ideas for your own garden, landscape and outdoor living area and to meet design-



ers that can make your outdoor space even more wonderful! A portion of the ticket fee helps to fund a scholarship program for future designers. Mark your calendar for the 15th Annual Tour in Northeast Portland on June 20th.

Debbie has two daughters, one daughter not into gardening at this time of her life and the other is into houseplants and sedums. Maybe a budding Plant Nerd? Rick has two sons and one of them works with him in his business. All in all, Debbie and her husband are outdoor people at work and during their time off. They love going to the Siletz River as much as possible, turning off all electronics to just be surrounded by nature. They also share their home with two dogs, a cat and a Sulcata Tortoise named Tito who has his own Facebook page, "Tito the Tortoise". Debbie rescued him about three years ago and enjoys taking care of him and posting photos and stories about him on Facebook.

Debbie does have a secret passion that she is letting me print, way back when and even today, Debbie loves to pull weeds and edge the lawn. Her husband Rick thinks that's a little weird, but she loves those garden chores. There is something soothing about weeding....

I asked Debbie what kind of landscapes does she specialize in designing? She loves to design all kinds of projects, large and small with smaller landscapes being a bit more challenging. She told me, large or small gardens, all her clients want the same thing, "to fit all their wants into the project." Yes, we do want our gardens to include everything our little gardening heart's desire! And, to get to that nirvana, Debbie Brooks is only a cell phone call away.





PHOTO CREDIT: SINGING TREE GARDENS



Daphne 'Jim's Pride'

PHOTO CREDIT: KIGI NURSERY



Daphne 'Summer Ice'

PHOTO CREDIT: KELLY NURSERY



Acer 'Sango Kaku'

### Creative Garden Spaces

<https://www.creativegardenspacesnw.com/>

### Cornerstone Outdoor Life

<https://cornerstoneoutdoorlife.com/>

### ANLD Tour

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# Dressing for Success

**The perfect dressing is essential to the perfect salad. So instead of buying it in a bottle, why not make your own?**

**by David Musial**



**A blender will create a creamier more emulsified salad dressing and use less muscle power than whisking.**



Salads are as popular as ever and at my house a weekly staple. Whether a classic Nicoise salad with tuna, nicoise olives, green beans, egg and potato or a salad composed with your favorite ingredients, salads are a great way to incorporate vitamin and mineral rich vegetables and other ingredients into the diet. What ties the ingredients all together is the vinaigrette or salad dressing. However, like the wrong trim color on a house, good vinaigrette will make or break a salad.

So what exactly is a vinaigrette? In the culinary world, sauces are an accompaniment to solid food, so vinaigrettes are a sauce. A cold acidic sauce is called a dressing, so when used for a salad, it is called a salad dressing. Just to confuse things a little, not all dressings are salad dressings as they have uses for other things than salads, which we'll touch upon later.

At its most basic, vinaigrettes are a combination of oil and vinegar, yet they are so much more complex. What oil and vinegar to use? What is the proper ratio of ingredients? What else goes into a vinaigrette and how do you get oil and vinegar to combine?

Due to the starring role of oil and vinegar, using high quality ingredients will result in a superior vinaigrette.

When we think of oil, we normally think about the cooking or baking properties. In a vinaigrette, it's all about flavor and the choices are numerous. Below is a sampling of oils and their characteristics.

**Olive Oil:** Can have a fruity, grassy or buttery flavor. Some can be bitter. A classic choice for vinaigrettes.

**Safflower or Canola Oil:** Mild flavor and clear in color. Great when paired with a more delicate vinegar.

**Peanut Oil:** Has a distinct flavor and works well in Asian dressings.

**Nut Oils:** Hazelnut and walnut oil have a rich nutty flavor and a little goes a long way. Expensive.

**Blends:** Quite often a 50/50 blend of a neutral oil, like safflower, added to olive oil. This is one of my favorites and one you can blend at home as



It's easy to create your own salad dressing and the ingredients are probably already in your kitchen, like the ingredients in this Catalina salad dressing.





The selection of vinegars to use in vinaigrettes would appear to be endless.

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.LIFEWHEREWEARE.COM

needed.

There is a world of choice when it comes to vinegar. Growing up, I remember white, cider, wine and malt vinegar (for fish and chips only). Today that is only the tip of the iceberg. Most are sold at 5% acidity, but some have a higher acid level and may need to be toned down with a little water or increase the amount of oil.

**Sherry:** Made from sherry and has a complex, somewhat sweet flavor.

**Balsamic:** This aged vinegar is dark, can be slightly thick and a little sweet.

**Rice:** Mild, delicate with a hint of sweetness.

**Fruit:** From fermented fruit, these vinegars have delicate flavor and should not be paired with aggressive oil.

**Champagne:** A great all around vinegar that has a clean and delicate flavor. A personal favorite.

It should also be noted here that other acids, such as lemon juice, can be used in place of or in conjunction with vinegar.

The ratio of oil to vinegar is generally 3:1, however, as mentioned above, many types of vinegar can be very acidic and strong in flavor. To balance the aggressiveness of the vinegar, a ratio of 4:1 or 5:1 may be used. In some cases, using less oil

may be desirable due to dietary requirements. Do remember though, the starting point should be 3:1 and adjustments made based on your palate.

Although oil and vinegar are the stars of vinaigrettes, it is the addition of aromatics, herbs and spices that when combined create the sal-



What makes this a Caesar salad...the vinaigrette.

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.COPYMETHAT.COM





**A properly dressed salad is lightly dressed and gently tossed.**

ad dressings we love. Common aromatics include shallots, garlic, ginger and citrus fruit zest. Herbs and spices run the gamut and herbs can be fresh or dried. Almost forgot two of the most important ingredients, salt and pepper added to taste.

We all know that oil and vinegar don't mix, or do they? In fact they do and the resulting mix-

ture is known as an emulsion or when one liquid coats the droplets of another liquid. In a vinaigrette, the vinegar is broken up into tiny droplets that get coated by the oil and the resulting mixture is an emulsion, but in the case of a vinegar, a temporary emulsion, as over a short period of time the two liquids will separate.

There are two methods to make a vinaigrette. One uses muscle and the other mechanical power. For muscle power use a whisk and for mechanical power a blender, and the process is as follows:

**Whisk**

Add the vinegar and seasoning to a bowl

Whisk until frothy

Drizzle oil in a slow, thin stream while whisking to incorporate

**Blender**

Add the vinegar and seasoning to the blender

Turn blender on to break the vinegar up into droplets

Add oil in a slow, thin stream while blending on high to incorporate

Although both methods will achieve excellent results, the fine bubbles created by the blender will result in a longer lasting emulsion.



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**Vinaigrettes aren't just for salad greens. Case in point, grain salads.**

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.EPICURIOUS.COM

Other factors for a longer lasting emulsion include:

- Use room temperature ingredients
- The addition of a stabilizer, such as a vegetable puree or honey
- The addition of an emulsifier like egg yolk or mustard. Best to use pasteurized eggs and don't use too much or you will wind up with mayonnaise.

In addition to dressing salad greens, vinaigrettes have many applications. They can be used to dress pasta and grain salads, as well as everyone's favorite, three bean salad. They can also be used as a marinade. There are even sandwiches, such as Italian subs that use vinaigrettes.

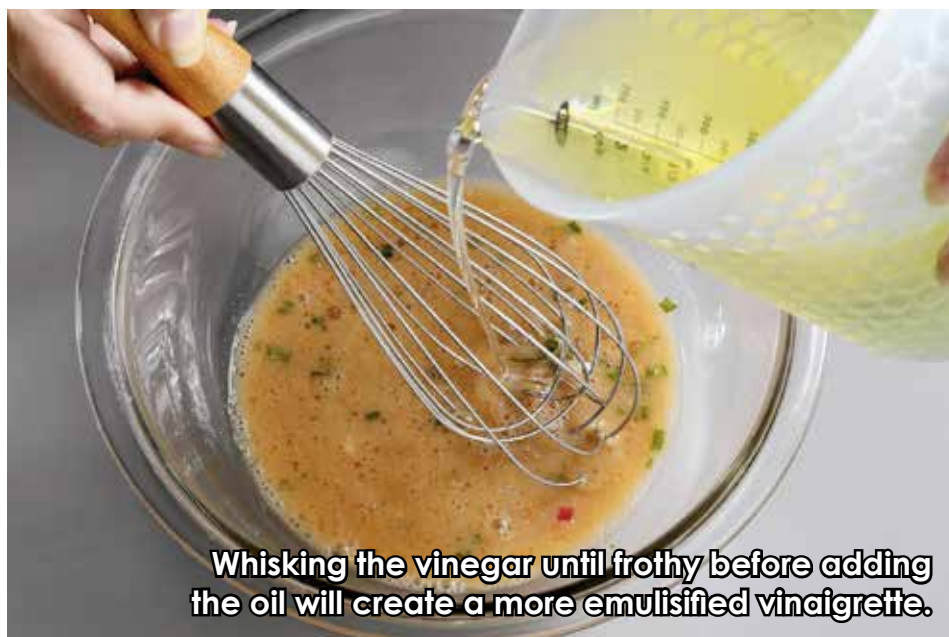
It is at this point that I would nor-

mally include a recipe. However, vinaigrettes are more about personal preference. Start with the oil to vinegar ratio of 3:1; add the herbs and spices that sound good. Always add each ingredient a little at a time and taste along the way. You can always

add more. Finish with salt and pepper, always.

Food for thought:

Don't overbeat the oil as it can become bitter and lose its delicate flavor



**Whisking the vinegar until frothy before adding the oil will create a more emulsified vinaigrette.**

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



Nut oils pair well with greens that are bitter or aggressive in flavor

Sweeteners can balance out the acid of vinegar; honey, agave and maple syrup (the real deal) bring sweetness and flavor

Add a little citrus zest when using citrus juice to increase the citrus flavor

Always store in the refrigerator

Taste, taste, taste. Balance, balance, balance. Fat (oil), acid, sweet, spice, bitter, salt....

When making salads, be sure the greens and other ingredients are dry to improve coating of the dressing. Lastly, if at all possible, never place the salad on a plate and drizzle with dressing. The dressing should lightly coat the ingredients and this is best accomplished by tossing in a bowl. This can be done with tongs or by hands (covered with food service gloves) and gentle tossing. Success is achieved when the ingredients are evenly coated and there is no pooling of dressing on the plate.

There are many reasons to make your own vinaigrette. Ability to control the amount and type of oil, use of fresh ingredients and just because it's easy, to mention a few. One of my favorite reasons to make my own salad dressing is that I can make a small amount and explore different flavors without buying a bottle.

In closing, I'd like to share the wisdom of Julia Child:

The perfect dressing is essential to the perfect salad, and I see no reason whatsoever for using a bottled dressing, which may have been sitting on the grocery shelf for weeks, even months - even years.



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# WTDITG

**April showers bring May flowers! They also make gardening a little trickier, when you have to dodge between the drops. If you prefer not to get wet, we recommend you invest in an inexpensive plastic poncho. Remember, your plants need you, rain or shine.**

## PLANNING

- Remember to make entries in your gardening journal!



- Plan on creating raised garden beds for veggies in spaces where the soil is hard to warm each spring or you have drainage problems.

- Observe the Mason Bees. Watch your bee population increase as more nesting block

tunnels are filled with bee eggs and sealed over with a mud plug. More bees equals more fruit! You still have time to put up nesting blocks this month

to attract native bees to take up residence and start working for you and your garden.

- Plan a visit or two or three to your local garden center as the weather warms and spring is sprouting out everywhere. There you will come across plenty of bulbs, flowers, veggies and herb starts, as well as all the trees and shrubs for any landscaping project you may have. This time of year, many garden centers will have new plants arriving daily, so plan to visit them often.



## PLANTING

- Plant summer bulbs like dahlia, gladiola and lilies. Wait one more

month to plant out begonias and cannas.

- Start planting perennials. Now is a great time

to start finding more and more

varieties available at your local nursery.

- April is a good month for planting, period. Edibles like blueberries and strawberries, landscape plants, ground covers, perennials or any other tree and shrub for the garden.

- Plant out glad bulbs and pot up dahlias if you want to pre-sprout the dahlias before May's planting. It is safe to plant lily bulbs

out now.

- Sow seed for alyssum, forget-me-nots, pansies, lobelia, portulaca aka Moss Rose and daisies this month just to name a few. Check the back of seed packages to see when the best time would be to sow your favorite flowers.

- If you have wintered over any fuchsias or geraniums now is the time to repot them into a larger pot with fresh potting soil.

## TASKS, MAINTENANCE & CLEAN-UP

- Prepare garden beds for planting, adding organic compost to garden beds and work in if this hasn't been done yet this year.

- Check the plants under the eaves of the house for water needs.

- Monitor soil temperature with a soil thermometer. When garden soil is consistently above 60 degrees F, the warm season crops can be planted out.

- Fertilize cane berries, blueberries, currants and strawberries.



# What To Do In The Garden

## APRIL

- Spray apples and pears if needed to prevent scab. Bonide Liquid Copper Fungicide is a good spray for the organic gardener for this purpose.



recommendaions for the best food for the Northwest climate.

- Thatching and lawn aerating are great to do in months of April or May. Grass seed can be put down safely the last half of April, avoiding most frosts. May and June are also good months to seed or

- Fertilize your lawn with a good organic lawn food. Check your local garden center for their

overseed the lawn.

- Apply Calpril lime to the lawn. Lime raises the soil ph to a level the grass enjoys, helping it to grow thicker and greener.

- Watch for frosts and cover tender transplants with Harvest Guard protective yard and garden cover.

- Prune evergreen conifers now. The months of April and May are great for pruning your various conifers. Cypress, spruce, junipers and cedars will respond to pruning by becoming fuller and bushier. Cut into only the green leafy part of the plants. Going back too far into the brown woody portions may mean that branch or section won't be able to re-grow more

foliage from that point.

- 'Candle pruning' pines are an easy way to control their height and width. As the new growth at branch tips in the form of a 'candle' lengthens, you can snap the new growth in half or even a little shorter. This type of pruning on pines is easy to do and won't leave visible scars.



## VEGETABLE GARDEN

- Plant perennial vegetables like asparagus, rhubarb, horseradish now.

- April is a good month to plant seeds outdoors for peas, carrots, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, celery, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, lima beans, onions, radishes, scarlet runner beans, spinach, swiss chard, parsnips and turnips.



- Artichoke plants can go in now.

- Seed potatoes can be planted now after they have been chitted. Refer to March planning section for an explanation on chitting or pick up an info sheet in the garden center on growing potatoes.

- Plant Walla Walla onion plant starts and red, yellow or white onion sets.

- The warmer weather crops like tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peppers, corn and beans should not be

planted out until the soil temp is above 60 F consistently.

- Start indoors, or pick up plant starts next month at your local garden center: basil, cucumbers, melons, and pumpkins.

- Use a floating row cover like Harvest Guard protective yard and garden cover to prevent insects like leaf miners, cabbage maggot flies and carrot rust fly from attacking the veggies.

- Harden-off any young plant started indoors, before planting outside, by setting the plants outdoors in a protected area, away from direct sun, for a few hours a day. Bring indoors at night. Increase time left out a half-hour each day, slowly exposing the seedlings to more sun, wind and rain. This helps to toughen up the leaves with a thicker cuticle and stronger stems.







# PLAY TIME

## Gardening Events Around Town

---

Due to venue closures imposed by state and local governments, many gardening-related events have been cancelled or postponed.

Since a printed calendar cannot adequately keep up with these changes, we are foregoing our events calendar for this issue. We encourage you to visit the websites of the nurseries or organizations sponsoring specific events to make sure you are reading the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Most garden centers are still open for shopping and are making extra efforts to clean their facilities and promote social distancing. Some are even offering curbside pickup and delivery (see our article on page 8 for more information).

We encourage you to follow all the guidelines for staying healthy during this challenging time, and we expect to resume posting event information as the situation improves.

Thank you for your understanding.

--The Staff at Garden Time Magazine

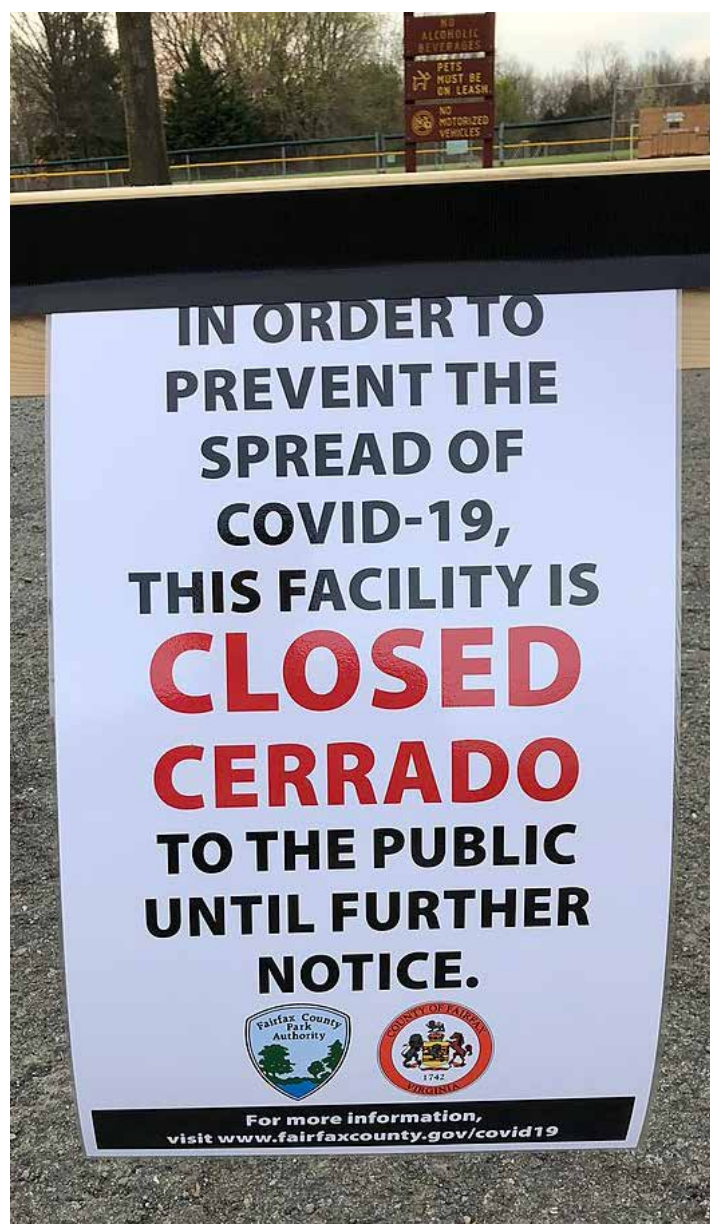


PHOTO CREDIT: FAMARTIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

### LOOKING FOR MORE?

You will find more events and updated information on the Garden Time Events Calendar  
[www.gardentime.tv/events.htm](http://www.gardentime.tv/events.htm)



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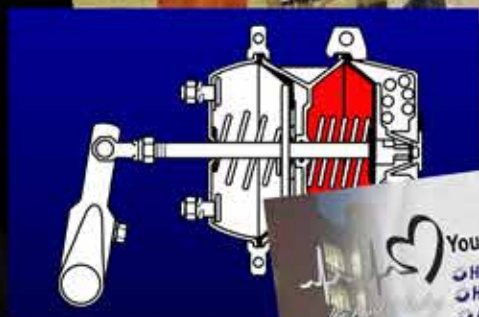
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