

April Program of the Month

How Does Your Garden Grow?

By: Joan Funk ~ Delta Chapter

Who doesn't love flowers?

In April many of us are thinking of planting a garden or potting flowers to enjoy all summer. It is exciting to get this project underway every year! Even if you just buy one geranium for your front porch, you are on your way to enjoying color and fragrance all summer, provided you remember to water it!

Inviting a local Garden Center representative to come to talk about getting your garden project underway is sure to appeal to everyone, whether they have one plant, or many, many plants.

Table decorations can include freshly potted plants.

A mixer can include providing a sampling of flowers (fresh or artificial) on each table and encouraging members to “name those flowers!” Provide a prize of a potted plant, a bag of flower seeds, and/or a watering can to the member who can name them all correctly, or whoever comes closest to naming them all.

I have included tips and tricks I received from a Garden Center Representative who presented a program for our chapter. It is titled: **Smarter Gardening**. There are many tips and tricks you may want to try to ensure a beautiful garden every year!



If you have time, **flower arranging** could also be part of this program. This could be done as a demonstration, or having members at the tables arrange groups of flowers provided for this purpose. Amazing results can happen!

Depending on your time and resources, actually **planting a plant** in potting soil and a small container is fun and encourages members to go home and start planting away!! They will have one to take home as their 'starter.' Many times the Garden Center representative will donate the plants, potting soil, and small containers for this hands on activity.

Enjoy the following tips to "Smarter Gardening."

SMARTER GARDENING

1. **Right Plant, Right Place**-sun/soil/moisture all matter. Digging a hole and checking to see how fast it drains tells you a lot about your site.
2. **KEEP YOUR TAGS** for future reference. If a plant is stressing, referring to the tag may answer/help with diagnosis.
3. **Follow our planting guidelines.** NEVER plant anything below the soil line in the pot EXCEPT for a Clematis.
4. Plants are zoned for **winter hardiness.** We are basically a 6, but if you are out in a windy, open area stick with 5's. If you are in town and have a sheltered area, you can push to 7, but may lose something now and again.
5. **Site preparation** is the hardest but payoffs the biggest. Amending the soil with compost (yard waste, not manure) helps with drainage and loosens up the clay.
6. **Organic gardening** creates a much better growing climate for all parts of your garden. Your soil is alive, so feed it as such. Don't fret if you aren't 100%-there is nothing organic for Crabgrass.
7. **ANNUALS**-Live only one year. **PERENNIALS**-if they had lived would have bloomed year after year
8. **Watering** in the morning is always better for your plants. Using water collected in a rain barrel is even better! Your irrigation system only waters the top 1 or 2 inches. General Rule of Thumb-See planting guidelines for watering instructions.
9. **Pruning** is the most often question we receive. GENERAL rule of Thumb: If it blooms before June 15 it is considered a spring bloomer (which means it blooms on last year's growth. Prune right after it finishes blooming. Summer bloomers -prune in late winter/early spring. Always use a sharp knife because clean wounds heal faster
10. **Fertilizing:** Most important in fall. Use Root Stimulator to get new plants established. MORE IS NOT BETTER. Using a mild fertilizer is often the best route.
11. Don't **OVERDO** Chemicals. Follow the directions on the bottle carefully.. sometimes nature with just take it's course and cure itself. Butterflies and Bees populations are suffering.

12. **Using tried and true** varieties means they work well, ie. Knockout rose (aka the gas station rose), May Night Salvia, Stella D Oro Day lilly, etc.
13. Using a **pre-emergent** such as treflan with keep your weeding to a minimum. Apply in March and July-a few minutes is all it takes and you'll be rewarded with more time for gardening and let time to weed)
14. **PLANTING/TRANSPLANTING** DEEPLY HYDRATE everything the day before mowing. NEVER dig up or transplant from a container a dry plant which is weak and vulnerable. ALWAYS break up roots (when planting from a container) and cut circling roots using sharp scissors.
15. **Container Gardening**-Larger containers don't need near as much water as small ones/Annuals in ground need even less.
16. **Laugh at yourself** if you do something stupid-we all have and will continue to do stupid things
17. This isn't ROCKET SCIENCE-it's way more important!
18. **"To Thine Own Self Be True"** Have realistic expectations of yourself and you won't be disappointed in yourself.
19. **My favorite resources:** Garden Gate Magazine, Fine Gardening, Chicagoland Gardening.