



April brings a thousand shades of green

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April can be fickle, with some days exceeding 90 degrees and some nights below 60. Insects are out in force, adding their buzzing, chirping, chomping and all the other things insects do in the daily passage of life.

Gardeners are already out chopping weeds, kneeling to put precious little plants into the ground, fertilizing, making and spreading compost.

Soil and Mulch

The greening of lawns notify us that it's time to put down organic compost on lawns now. Spread a quarter- to a half-inch of aged compost on your lawn. Adding compost to shrub and flower beds helps the soil to retain moisture and boosts the microbial life there. Most of the soils in The Woodlands have less than one percent organic matter in them. The recommended amount for any type of planting is five percent.

It's time to lay down organic mulch also. Mulching keeps the soil at a stable temperature (a welcome benefit when the ambient temperature is 100+ degrees). The addition of mulch helps keep moisture in the soil, prevents soil from splashing up onto leaves during rain or irrigation and protects the plants from pests. Mulch also decomposes, adding more organic matter to the soil.

Watering

Good gardeners know how to water plants. They also know that too much water can be as harmful to plants as too little water.

But, how does one know how much water to put on a landscape or on perennials, or, for that matter, on vegetables? A good rule of thumb is to add an inch of water every week or 10 days. If it has rained, subtract that amount from the inch.

Plants have ways of communicating when they need water. Dry turf grass will retain the outline of footprints. That's the time to water. Perennials and annuals will droop slightly. That's also the time to water.

Fire Ants

Fire ants are always a problem here in the spring. There are several ways to deal with them: drown them with poisonous insecticides (which is not recommended); use organic pesticides (there are several on the market) or ask them to move. The last method is impractical and the first

method is environmentally questionable, which leaves the second method. Two natural insecticides have been proven to be effective against fire ants.

The first is Spinosad, which is a biological ingredient that causes fire ants (and coincidentally, fleas) to increase their metabolism so rapidly that they actually run themselves to death. The second is eugenol, which is made from clove oil.



Pollinators

Bees aren't buzzing around because they're pests, and beetles aren't crawling around to disturb humans. These insects and hundreds of thousands of others, are carrying on their own work of propagation.

In doing so, however, they give us humans a gift: that of pollinating our trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. Were it not for these insects, plants would not be able to propagate.

That's why it's important to make them feel at home. Plants that provide food, nectar and pollen to the thousands of species of bees, beetles, flies and other insects that are responsible for pollinating our gardens can be planted now.

“This spring as it comes bursts up
in bonfires green,
Wild puffing of emerald trees,
and flame-filled bushes,
Thorn-blossom lifting
in wreaths of smoke between
Where the wood fumes up and the
watery, flickering rushes.
I am amazed at this spring,
this conflagration
Of green fires lit on the soil
of the earth, this blaze
Of growing, and sparks that puff
in wild gyration,
Faces of people streaming
across my gaze.”

- D. H. Lawrence
The Enkindled Spring

Upcoming Free Events

Rainwater Harvesting Seminar
presented by The Montgomery
County Master Gardeners
\$50 registration, includes lunch
Saturday, April 21, 2012
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Thomas LeRoy Education Center
9020 Airport Road
Conroe
Call 936-539-7824 for reservations.
No registration at the door.

Compost Class!
Back by popular demand!
Saturday, March 12, 2012
9 – 10 a.m.
No reservations required
Drawing for free compost bin
8203 Millennium Forest Drive
The Woodlands
281-210-3800

www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/gardeningevents

