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Linnaeus in Your Garden

By Cathy Caldwell | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5



Eventually, all gardeners, as they progress into the horticultural world, realize that the common names of plants have some limitations. Local common names can create confusion. Two gardeners using a common name could be talking about two different plants and never realize it. A great example is bluebells. Do you mean the bulb or the native herbaceous plant? A situation like this calls for a more precise nomenclature, right? And fortunately gardeners the world over have one — botanical Latin.

If you travel anywhere in the world visiting gardens — whether you speak the native tongue or not — if the plants are labeled in botanical Latin, you'll know exactly what plant it is you're viewing. This common language among gardeners and scientists came to us thanks to Carl Von Linné, who later adopted his own Latin name — Linnaeus.

Linnaeus was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist during the 18th century. He is known as the Father of Taxonomy, a branch of science that groups and classifies plants as well as insects, animals, birds, etc. Linnaeus designed the binomial (that is, two-names) classification system for plant species in his 1753 book *Species Plantarum*. The language of choice was and is Latin, though the dreaded Latin of high school students is a bit different from botanical Latin. Botanical Latin has been anglicized; plus, other languages

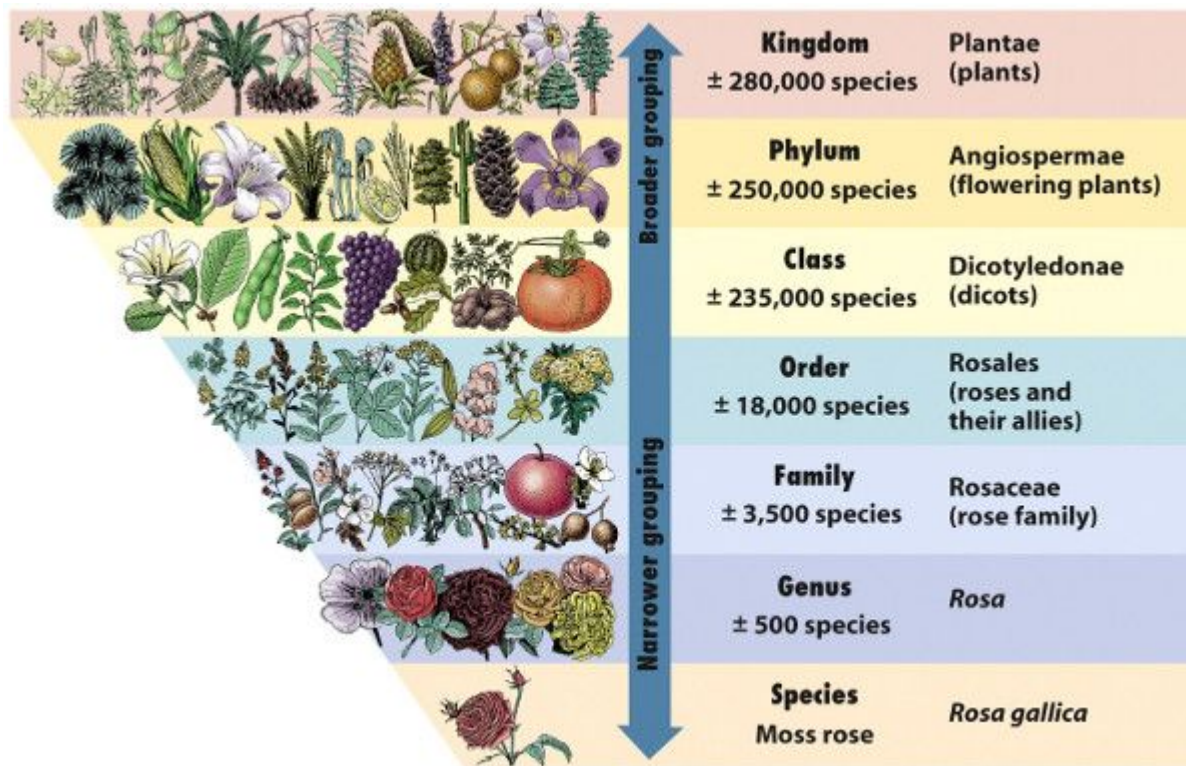


Figure 2-6 Discover Biology 3/e
© 2006 W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Plant Taxonomy, Purves et al., Life: The Science of Biology, 4th ed.

The two divisions we will come to understand this month are **genus** and **species**. Within a family of plants there are MANY genera (which is the plural of genus.) Within a genus, there could be trillions of species or just one. When you look at a plant label at the nursery, the Latin name — which is the plant's scientific name — consists of the genus and species.

Because taxonomy is a precise system, a scientific plant name follows certain rules. **Genus always comes first** and is ALWAYS capitalized. **Species always comes second** and is ALWAYS lower case. SO: my name is Frances Boninti, but in the scientific system of plant taxonomy, I would be *Boninti frances*. And that's because there could be billions of Bonintis but only a single frances. Since there are more species of Boninti, we could abbreviate the genus, like so: *B. andrew*, *B. kendall* and *B. caitlin*. Now for a plant example: the genus for oaks is quercus. There are *Quercus alba*, *Q. nigra*, *Q. rubra* and many, many more species of quercus.

But where did these names come from? The genus and species names could have been chosen in honor of the plant's discoverer, or the old Latin name of the plant (back before Linnaeus came along) or the location of the plant, or a description of the plant — among other things.

Next month, a few more rules and we are on our way.....

RESOURCES:

International Plant Name Index, www.ipni.org
<http://plants.usda.gov/>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/122.html>

Clematis – Queen of the Vines

By Patsy Chadwick | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5



Gardeners are always searching for plants to provide that “wow” factor in the landscape. For some of us, clematis is the “holy grail” of ornamental plants. Few plants elicit as many oohs and aahs as a clematis in full bloom covering an arbor or stone wall. Even the butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds are as attracted to clematis as we humans. One of the most spectacular of the flowering vines, clematis enjoys a long-standing and justly deserved reputation as the “queen of the vines.”

Sources vary on the statistics, but it's safe to say that the clematis genus consists of at least 250 species and more than 2,500 (mainly large-flowered) cultivars. A member of the *Ranunculaceae* family, which includes aconites, anemones, buttercups, paeonies, and hellebores, the clematis genus may be found in most countries throughout the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere and, to some extent, the southern hemisphere. Most clematis varieties are woody, deciduous vines that are hardy to USDA zones 3 or 4. A few species, such as *C. armandii*, are evergreen and tend not to be as hardy as their deciduous relatives. A few selections are bush type rather than vines.

Clematis vines vary considerably in size and color. Most large-flowered hybrids range from 8 to 12 feet tall, while some of the small, herbaceous species grow a mere 2 to 5 feet. Vigorous species, such as sweet autumn clematis (*C. terniflora*) and anemone clematis (*C. montana*), can grow 20 to 30 feet long. Clematis colors range from pure white to deepest purple with shades of pink, lavender, blue, violet, yellow, and red, as well as bi-colors.

During a single growing season, a large-flowered hybrid may have a hundred or more star- or saucer-shaped blossoms ranging in size from 4 to 10 inches in diameter. The flowers may be single, double, or semi-double. The urn- or bell-shaped blossoms on some of the smaller or native species tend to be much daintier in appearance. Bloom time may run from spring into autumn, depending on the selection. The feathery or fluffy-looking seed heads that follow the blossoms continue to lend interest to the garden for the remainder of the growing season.

Of the approximately three dozen North American clematis species, 11 are native to Virginia, according to both *Flora of Virginia* and the United States Department of Agriculture plant database. ***C. viorna* and *C. crispa* are two particularly charming native species.** They have diminutive bell-shaped flowers that range in color from pink to violet purple. *C. texensis*, which is native to Texas, is represented by 'Duchess of Albany' and 'Princess Diana,' both of which sport 2 to 3 inch tulip-shaped pink to reddish-pink flowers. Because clematis has been widely hybridized since the 1800s, many crosses exist between North American species and their non-native counterparts. For example, 'Betty Corning,' a well-known and cherished award-winning hybrid introduced in 1932, is a cross between *C. crispa* and *C. viticella*, a native of southern Europe.



Clematis hybrid 'Betty Corning'



Clematis virginiana

Of the native clematis species, *C. virginiana* is perhaps one of the most widely distributed. Also known as virgin's bower or devil's

darning
needles, this
fall-
blooming
species is
native to the
entire
eastern half
of North
America.
Do not
confuse this
plant with *C.*
terniflora
(sweet
autumn
clematis), a
non-native
species from
Asia. Unlike
the vast
majority of
clematis
species,
which are
generally
well
behaved,
both *C.*
virginiana
and *C.*
terniflora
are rampant
growers and
aggressive
self-
seeders.
Both
produce
clouds of 1
inch wide
white
blossoms
that give
way to
attractive,
plume-like
seed heads.
To
distinguish

the two,
look at the
foliage. *C.*
virginiana
has toothed
leaves that
are trifoliate
(3 leaflets).
C. terniflora
(which is
sometimes
sold under
the name *C.*
paniculata)
has slightly
rounded
simple
leaves with
smooth
margins. If
you grow
either *C.*
virginiana or
C. terniflora,
cut them
back hard in
autumn
immediately
after
flowering so
that they do
not have a
chance to
set seed.

CULTIVATION AND MAINTENANCE

Clematis has a reputation for being difficult to grow. Basically, there are several reasons for this perception: (1) Since the majority of clematis species are vines, some training onto supports is involved initially. (2) It takes 2 or 3 years for a clematis to become mature enough to produce the magnificent displays for which it is renowned. (3) Most clematis need to be pruned yearly and there's a lot of confusion about when and how to prune. If you're looking for instant gratification, perhaps an annual vine, such as morning glory, hyacinth bean, or moon flower, might be more to your liking. Otherwise, just be patient. Once your clematis is established, it is generally no more difficult than any other ornamental plant to grow and maintain.

Cultural Requirements:

- **Soil:** Clematis thrives best in moisture-retentive but well-drained soil.
- **Light:** Most of the climbing and shrub species will thrive in either full sun or partial shade.

Herbaceous species do best in full sun.

- **Water:** Water regularly during periods of dry weather in the first few seasons after planting.

Planting:

- Dig the planting hole close enough to a support so that the vine can be easily trained onto it.
- For large-flowered species and cultivars that bloom in spring, plant the crown 2 to 3 inches deeper in the soil than it was in the pot. This encourages shoots to grow from below the soil level and results in a bushier plant. Also, deeper planting will help ensure the plant's survival in the event it becomes infected by clematis wilt (more on that below).
- Plant the crown of herbaceous and evergreen species at soil level.

Training:

- Provide a support such as a trellis, arbor, post, mesh, or tuteur for the clematis to twine around. Many species of clematis have tendrils, which are thin modified stems or leaves that twist into coils. The tendrils not only wrap around the support but also wrap around each other or any nearby plant.
- A newly planted clematis may initially need to be tied to the support. Spread the shoots as wide as possible on the trellis to give good coverage. Otherwise, the plant may grow in a concentrated narrow column up the trellis.

HOW TO PRUNE CLEMATIS

Initial Pruning Guidelines:

If left unpruned, a young, newly-planted clematis may produce a few long single stems with flowers only at the tips of each stem. To encourage multiple stems and a fuller habit, prune newly planted clematis vines the first spring after they were planted to about 12 inches above the soil level. This can be done in February or March. Be sure to cut each stem just above a bud. Once the stems start to grow in the spring and summer, the new growth should be spread out so that it is spaced evenly on the support and tied in place. Pinching out developing young shoots once or twice will promote further branching.

General Pruning Guidelines:

Clematis vines need to be pruned regularly. That's a fact of life. Pruning encourages strong growth and flowering and keeps growth in check. If left unpruned, a clematis can become a mass of tangled stems with little foliage near the base and all flowers concentrated on the tips of stems. For pruning purposes, the vines are grouped into three categories and that's where the confusion arises. If you can't remember which group your clematis fits into, here's a hint: it depends on what time of year the plant blooms. For example:

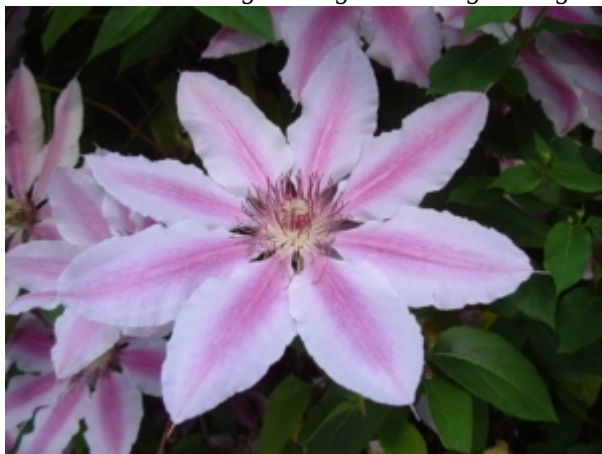
- **Group 1: Blooms in mid to late spring.** Prune immediately after flowering in mid to late spring. This group blooms in the spring on the previous year's growth. Once pruned, the new shoots will develop buds for next year's flowers. Slower-growing varieties may not require much, if any, pruning. The less you prune, the earlier next year's blossoms will appear. So be judicious in deciding how far back to prune.

Vigorous or fast-growing varieties may need to be cut back more severely in order to contain their size. If you have a very old group 1 clematis with woody stems, avoid cutting down into the old wood because it may be reluctant to set buds in time for the next growing season. Clematis species belonging to this group include *C. alpina*, *C. armandii*, *C. macropetala*, and *C. montana*.



Clematis alpina 'Tage Lundell'

- **Group 2: Blooms twice: In late spring/early summer and again in late summer.** Prune in late winter and again after the first flush of blossoms in spring or early summer. This group consists of many of the large-flowered hybrids and is the trickiest group to prune because the plants bloom twice during the growing season. In general, the spring blossoms occur on last season's wood and the summer blossoms occur on new shoots. The goal of pruning this group is twofold: (1) retain a healthy framework of old wood and (2) stimulate new growth in order to maximize flowering throughout the growing season. Timing is everything.



Clematis 'Nelly Moser'

One approach is to thin out some of the stems in late winter and the rest after the first flush of blossoms. Make all cuts above healthy new buds. If this sounds like too much trouble, another approach is to prune the entire plant back by half or more every 2 or 3 years. In the first year after rejuvenation pruning, the plant will only flower once. Some plant selections in this group include: *C. lanuginosa*, *C. florida*, and large-flowered hybrids such as 'Nelly Moser', 'Miss Bateman', 'Duchess of Edinburgh', and 'Mrs. Cholmondeley' among others.

- **Group 3: Blooms in late summer/early fall.** Prune in late winter. This is the easiest group to prune. Group 3 clematis vines flower in late summer or in fall on new growth that was produced that season. They send forth new growth from the base each year and can therefore be cut back hard on a regular basis. Simply cut the vines back to about 1 foot from the ground. If left unpruned, the members of this group will continue growing from where the growth ended the previous season. This will cause the plant to become top heavy. Moreover, flowering will occur at the tips of each stem, leaving a bare base. Representative plant selections in this group include: *C. viticella*, *C. x jackmanii*, *C. integrifolia*, and *C. terniflora*.



Clematis viticella 'Rubra'

If you're still confused about pruning, don't worry about it. Even if you don't prune correctly, clematis is very forgiving. At worst, you'll only lose one season of blossoms.

CLEMATIS PESTS AND DISEASES

Most clematis are trouble-free once they become established in the landscape. However, they may periodically experience damage from several typical garden pests such as aphids, earwigs, whiteflies, red spider mites, slugs and snails. Deer don't normally bother clematis, but rabbits may nibble on the tender new shoots as they leaf out in the spring.

Clematis is susceptible to two fungal diseases: powdery mildew and clematis wilt. Powdery mildew occurs most often on plants that are planted in areas with poor air circulation. Clematis wilt is a more serious disease that manifests itself by the sudden collapse of the vine or some portion of it. In general, this happens just about the time the plant is ready to bloom. Within a few days after collapse, the stem and leaves will turn black and die. To solve the problem, cut diseased stems off just below ground level and destroy all affected parts of the plant. The vine will usually grow back from the base the following year **if it was planted with two buds below ground**. This disease mainly affects large-flowered hybrids. Small-flowered species and their cultivars are less susceptible. Plants in their first year of growth seem to be more susceptible to clematis wilt than established specimens.

PROPAGATION

Clematis may be propagated in one of several ways:

- Stem cuttings, which may be taken from spring to late summer
- Layering, which may be done from late winter to spring
- Seed. While hybrids will not come true from seed, species clematis will. Sow the seed in pots in the fall and cover with a fine layer of compost and grit. Store the pots in a cold frame or unheated greenhouse until the following spring, at which time the seeds should germinate.

USES IN THE ORNAMENTAL GARDEN

A display of a single mass of clematis blossoms is sure to give you the "WOW" factor you're going for in the ornamental garden. Some suggested ways to incorporate this beautiful plant in your landscape include the following:

- Train the vine onto a well-placed trellis, arbor or other vertical structure in the landscape so that the vine can be the star of the horticultural show.
- Weave the vine up and through nearby shrubs or trees if you don't want to bother training the plant onto a support structure. Roses and clematis are a classic combination.
- Grow one or more along a low fence to camouflage trash cans or HVAC equipment.
- Plant one of the more compact selections at the base of a mailbox post. Avoid using the long vining types for this purpose as they will grow too large for the mailbox.
- Let the bush type species sprawl as a ground cover.
- Plant as a backdrop to lower growing annuals and perennials.
- Plant at the base of a fence and let the vine scramble up and over the supports to break up the long expanse.

SOURCES

A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants (The American Horticultural Society, 2008).

Flora of Virginia (Weakley, Alan S.; Ludwig, J. Christopher; and Townsend, John F., 2012).

Native Plants of the Southeast (Mellenchamp, Larry, 2014).

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Plants Database website, plants.usda.gov

Eggplant

By Cleve Campbell | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5



What's not to like about the heat-loving eggplant? They come in all shapes and sizes, small and round like an egg, long and skinny like a zucchini or large and oblong. The colors of their skin can be gorgeous, varying from white to green to deep purple to many colors in between. A true international vegetable, technically a fruit, is popular the world over — from Greek moussaka, Italian eggplant parmesan, French ratatouille, Asian stir-fries to Indian curries. This versatile vegetable can also be fried, grilled, added to soups, made into dips, featured in casseroles and stuffed. The culinary possibilities are endless. Not only is this vegetable a star in the kitchen, it can become a show-off in the vegetable or even the ornamental garden, thanks to its large dramatic foliage, purple flowers and colorful fruit. Did you know that eggplant can be grown successfully in a container? Try it and you'll be adding color and ornamental beauty to your deck or patio, offering a convenient location to harvest a nourishing vegetable!

The eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) was domesticated from wild forms in the Indo-Burma region, and evidence suggests that it was cultivated as long ago as 300 BC. It was brought to Europe during the Middle Ages. The Moors are given credit for introducing the eggplant in Spain, which in turn, transported the eggplant to the new world. The word eggplant in English dates to the British occupation of India, where the egg shaped fruits was very popular in some areas. Thus the name eggplant. (Daunay & Janick)



Every wonder how eggplant got its name?

There are [three basic types of eggplant](#). First, there's the large oval-fruited eggplant with purple skin — the common type found in the produce section of many supermarkets ('Black Beauty'). Then there's the oriental or Asian elongated type, which has the shape of a zucchini, but with purple skin (Ichiban). But if purple is not your color, there's the novelty type with various sizes, shapes and colors, including white ('White Beauty'), lavender ('Rosita'), green ('Applegreen'), yellow ('Thai Yellow Egg'), orange ('Turkish Italian Orange'), and red ('Korean Red'). A gardening friend includes eggplants in his edible landscape to show off their many shapes, brightly colored fruits and large leaves.



Eggplant varieties showing diversity in shapes and color.
Photo Source: Phoebe - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curried=21271388>

Choosing a Planting Spot

There's an old gardening saying — “right plant, right place” — and that is certainly true for eggplants, as they [require full sun](#) for at least 6 hours a day in fertile, well-drained soil with a high level of organic matter, and a pH of neutral to acid in the range of 6.0-7.0. However, I have found over the years that eggplant will tolerate less than ideal soil conditions, but do not thrive in very humid and wet areas.

Varieties:

[Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-480](#) recommends the following varieties for our area: 'Mission Bell', 'Black Knight' and 'Little Fingers'. Over the years I have also found 'Oriental Express', 'Nadia', 'Long Purple', 'Ichiban' and 'Rosita' to be reliable, productive performers in our area.

Planting Guidelines:

Because eggplant is a warm-season vegetable with a long growing season, it is typically started from transplants and not directly seeded in the garden. Transplants that are 6 to 8 inches tall and grown in individual pots are ideal, and will give you a head-start on the eggplant's long growing season.

Cool weather is not favorable for eggplant growth. In fact, eggplants are less tolerant of frost than its cousins, tomatoes and peppers. Most cultivars require a long frost-free period, 100 to 150 days from seed. Seeds germinate quickly at 70^o-90^o and should be started indoors 8 to 10 weeks before transplanting. Once transplanted, eggplant requires 70-80 days to mature. I usually wait at least **two to three weeks after the last average frost date** to set out my eggplant seedlings.. A common mistake is to transplant eggplant too early. Cold weather inhibits plant and root growth, reducing plant vigor and yields. When planting in rows, place transplants about 18 to 24 inches apart.



Container Grown Eggplant
Photo Source: University of Maryland Extension

And as I mentioned earlier, **eggplants can also be grown in containers**, but require **at least a two-gallon pot per plant**. Containers are a great way to turn any surface into a productive vegetable garden. Containers also provide a good solution if you are short on garden space or simply want to enjoy the convenience. Eggplants grown in containers need constant water monitoring, as pots tend to dry-out quickly. Cultivars with compact plants are a good choice for container growing, and the [suggested compact plants](#) include ‘Fairy Tale’, ‘Crescent Moon’, ‘Hansel’, ‘Gretel’, and ‘Bambino’.

Plant Maintenance:

Eggplant belongs to the same family (*Solanaceae*) as the tomato, pepper and potato, and thus shares many of the same growing needs and problems. Eggplants are [heavy feeders](#) — an adequate supply of nutrients is needed throughout the growing season. The [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-413](#) recommends applying 3 lbs of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet before planting, and side-dressing with 1 pound of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet 3-4 weeks after planting, or the equivalent of a complete organic vegetable fertilizer. Keep the area free of weeds as weeds will compete for moisture, sunlight and nutrients. Because I am a lazy gardener, I mulch around the plants with leaves or straw to reduce the need to pull weeds, and also to reduce water loss. I usually wait until the plants become established before mulching to allow time for the soil to warm up. **Mulching too early keeps the soil cool, results in slow growth, poor fruit set, and shallow rooting.**

Eggplants need constant water and lots of it — a minimum of **one to two inches per week**. Mulching prevents moisture loss and the need to water frequently. When I water, more is better! I give my eggplants a heavy soaking at weekly intervals because light, frequent watering promotes shallow root systems, resulting in a weaker plant.

Know your variety! When grown under favorable conditions, some eggplant varieties — such as ‘Black Beauty’ — reach a height of 4 feet and **develop large, heavy fruit that will require support** to keep the

branches from breaking or keep the plants from blowing over in windy conditions. This also keeps the fruit off the ground which tend to spoil.

Common problems:

Pests



Flea beetles attacking eggplant
Photo Source: University of Maryland Extension

Plant eggplants and they will come. Every year just like clock work, soon after planting eggplant, the **flea beetles** appear, and proceed to chew small holes in the leaves — and this chewing will seriously weaken young plants. In addition to feeding on the leaves, flea beetle larvae also feed on the roots of the plant. I have found **floating row covers** provide adequate protection.

Eggplants have perfect flowers — meaning they contain both male and female parts and are considered to be self-pollinating like their relatives the tomato and the pepper. However, research indicates that eggplant pollination and fruit-set is enhanced by bee activity. Once the eggplant starts to bloom, I remove the row cover. After the plant blooms, it's been my experience that the flea beetle pressure decreases.



Eggplants have perfect flowers (containing both male and female parts).
Photo: Washington State University

[The University of Maryland](#) has documented success spraying the eggplant leaves with “Surround” — an organic product, made from kaolin, a fine clay, which forms a very thin barrier on the leaves, protecting them from hungry flea beetles. Tests conducted by the University of Maryland indicate that **early spraying** of transplants with this organic product significantly decreased flea beetle damage and increased yields compared to untreated plants. The tests also showed that early spraying, before the eggplants are attacked, was more effective than spraying after the flea beetles have attacked. The University of Maryland has also produced a [brief video](#) demonstrating how to apply Surround to the leaves of eggplant to protect them from flea beetles.

Other pests to watch for with eggplant include aphids, lace bugs, Colorado potato beetles, red spider mites and white flies.

Diseases:



Verticillium-infected eggplant with leaves exhibiting symptoms on half of each leaf.

Photo Source: The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

The most common disease that affects eggplant is Verticillium wilt, a soil fungus disease which affects the vascular system of the plant and results in stunted plant growth, yellow discoloration and eventual defoliation of lower foliage, and finally, plant death. An infected plant should be removed from the garden and destroyed. **Placing the debris in the compost pile will contaminate the compost with the disease.** This disease can remain in the soil for years; therefore, it is very important to avoid planting susceptible vegetables in the same areas as other members of the nightshade family — tomato, pepper and potato. Once a plant has Verticillium wilt there is no cure; however, [research](#) has shown that eggplants grafted to Verticillium wilt-resistant root stock produce more vigorous and productive plants. I have recently noticed that this type of grafted eggplant is being marketed by several specialty nurseries.

Harvesting:

Begin harvesting eggplant when the fruits reach [full size](#) and the skin is shiny. Another test of doneness is to press the side of the fruit firmly; if this pressure produces a thumbprint that bounces back quickly, your eggplant is ready for harvest. Under-ripe eggplant is too hard to take a thumbprint and overripe ones are so soft that a thumbprint leaves a permanent bruise. **Harvest fruit by cutting, not twisting**, which can damage the plant.

Eggplant is a relatively easy and fun plant to grow and makes a wonderful garden addition. They also add the excitement of color and texture to your vegetable or ornamental garden, and their culinary uses are endless!

Thanks for joining us in **The Garden Shed**. We hope to see you next month.

Resources:

"History and Iconography of Eggplant," *Chronica Horticulturae*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp.16-22 (Daunay & Janick, 2007)

"Vegetables: Growing Eggplant in Home Gardens," Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet, FS149E,

<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15719&SeriesCode=&CategoryID=&Keyword=eggplant>

"Container Grown Eggplants," Penn State University

Extension, <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/gardening/fact-sheets/vegetable-gardening/growing-great-container-vegetables/eggplants>

"Potatoes, Peppers, and Eggplant," Va. Coop. Ext. Publication 426-413,

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-413/426-413.html>

"Examining an Organic Control For Flea Beetles on Eggplant," University of Maryland Extension,

<http://extension.umd.edu/learn/examining-organic-control-flea-beetles-eggplant>

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<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-480/426-480.html>

“Grafting Eggplant onto Tomato Rootstock to Suppress *Verticillium dahliae* Infection: The Effect of Root Exudates,” *HortScience*, Vol. 24 No. 7, pp. 2058-2062 (Dec. 2009) <http://hortsci.ashspublications.org/content/44/7/2058.full#content-block>

The Ornamental Garden in May

By Patsy Chadwick | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5

When it comes to gardening chores, April is just a dress rehearsal for May. With the arrival of warmer weather, gardening evolves into a competitive sport among us gardeners. So we design, plant, sow, weed, mulch, and fuss over each emerging plant. Once we're satisfied that the garden is at its most glorious -admit it - we can't wait to show it off, right? I can't think of a better excuse to throw a barbecue or picnic and invite friends and neighbors over. After all, gardens are meant for sharing.



Author's Ornamental Garden in May

This is the time of year when gardeners are most likely to indulge in impulse buying sprees at the garden centers. With so many plant choices, it's easy to see why. **Don't buy more plants than your available garden space can accommodate.** That's how yours truly ended up with a 5-foot wide hardy hibiscus in a space meant for a plant half that size. If the ultimate size of the plant you ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE exceeds the dimensions of your planting space, quietly put the plant back on the display at the garden center and walk away.

Replace pansies and violas with colorful warm weather annuals this month. Pansies normally last into May but start to look tired as summer temperatures heat up. Rip them out now so that their replacements will have time to get established before the onset of hot weather. TIP: Consider heat- and drought-tolerant annuals such as petunias, verbena, lantana, madagascar vinca, portulaca, or perhaps fan flower (scaevola). Depending on the spreading tendencies of your selection, a few plants can cover a large area.



Scaevola (Fan Flower) Used As a Ground Cover

Direct sow seeds of annuals such as cosmos, marigolds, cleome, gomphrena, or zinnias in the early part of May. Later, when the plants reach 4 to 6 inches in height, pinch them back to promote bushier growth. This will ultimately produce more flowers.

Transplant bedding plants on a cool, calm, cloudy day. The cooler temperatures and cloud cover will cause less stress to the plants and will help them settle in sooner. Also, **pinch off any buds or open blooms** so that the plant will concentrate its energy into root development. A little delayed gratification now will mean a healthier, more floriferous plant later.

Plant a container garden this spring. If you've never planted one before, container gardens are a great way to experiment with colors, textures, and new plant combinations. For best results, choose a large pot that has a hole for drainage. TIP: A plastic pot holds moisture better than a terra cotta pot and is not as heavy. Choose plants that have similar requirements for light, water, and soil and that are in scale with one another. In other words, choose: (1) a **thriller** — at least one plant that is as tall as the container to give the composition height and proportion, (2) **spillers** - vining or creeping plants that will drape over the edge of the pot and soften the composition, and (3) **fillers** - mid-size plants that will fill out the composition.

Plant tender summer-blooming bulbs, including dahlias, tuberous begonias, caladiums, elephant's ears, *Colocasia* (taro), oxalis, gloriosa lilies, calla lilies, canna lilies, gladioli and tuberoses, among others. Summer bulbs must be planted after the danger of frost and in soil that has warmed up to about 60°F. To prevent the bulbs from molding or rotting before they can become established, plant them in a well-drained site. Unless package directions instruct otherwise, plant the bulbs about three times the depth of the bulb circumference. In other words, a bulb with a circumference of 2 inches should be planted about 6 inches deep.

Plant a vine to add architectural interest to the ornamental garden or to add a vertical dimension to a smaller garden where space is limited. If you're not ready to commit to a perennial vine, experiment with annual vines, such as:

1. Black-eyed Susan Vine (*Thunbergia alata*) — This 6- to 7-ft. long vine sports perky orange, yellow, or white blossoms with dark centers. Pinch back the spent blossoms to keep it blooming.

2. Cardinal Climber (*Ipomoea x multifida*) - The bright red, trumpet-shaped flowers are nectar rich. Expect lots of hummingbird activity in the vicinity of this climber, which grows from 6 to 12 ft. tall. This twining vine can self-sow aggressively but seedlings are easy to remove from the garden.

3. Moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*) - Large heart-shaped leaves are very attractive along the 20-ft. long stems. The large, fragrant, white flowers open in late afternoon and close by late morning the next day.

4. Morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*) - As its name suggests, it blooms in the mornings and closes during the heat of the day. As fall approaches, the flowers stay open most of the day and put on a spectacular show. Tip: This 15-ft. long vining plant readily re-seeds. To prevent re-seeding, either remove spent flowers as they fade or pull up all the dead vines after the first killing frost.



Black-Eyed Susan Vine



Morning Glory 'Heavenly Blue'



Purple Hyacinth Bean

5. Purple Hyacinth Bean (*Lablab purpureus*) - You get a bonus with this 6- to 15-ft. long vine. In addition to rich lavender flower spikes, this vine produces deep reddish-purple seed pods that are every bit

as attractive
as the
flowers.

6. Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) – An old-fashioned favorite, this vine grows 6 to 8 feet tall. The more you cut the sweet-smelling flowers for bouquets, the more the plant will produce.

Provide adequate water to newly-planted seedlings and transplants and protect them from drying wind and hot sun until they establish good root structures. This is particularly important during the first few weeks for healthy root development. Lack of moisture is one of the key reasons young plants die before they become established. If the root ball dries out, the plant may not recover from the stress. Too much water is just as bad for seedlings and transplants because soggy soil may cause their roots to rot.

Monitor moisture requirements of newly planted trees. In general, **it takes 2 to 3 years for a tree to become established** in the landscape. Adequate moisture is particularly critical during this period to encourage healthy root development beyond the original root ball. Don't take it for granted that light spring rains will provide enough moisture at the root level. In the absence of good soaking rains, provide supplemental water, particularly as daytime temperatures grow hotter. Cover the entire area under the tree canopy to keep the soil evenly moist but not soggy around the root ball and surrounding soil. Too much water can be as detrimental to the health of a tree as too little.

If you want to **attract bees and other pollinators** to your ornamental garden, flowers with single petals rather than double petals are generally a better choice. Plant developers have put a great deal of effort into producing double flowering varieties. Echinacea (cone flower) is a good example of a plant that has undergone significant breeding for fuller, showier flowers. While that gives the average home gardener more variety and pizzazz for the garden, the downside is that it affects the flower's ability to produce pollen. In order to produce double flowers, the stamens (male portion of the flower) are bred to transform into extra petals. Because of this alteration to the basic anatomy of the flower, the blossom may not produce as much pollen as a flower having single-petals. So, if you're looking to attract pollinators, go with the old-fashioned species.

Snip off the seed heads of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs after the flowers are finished but leave the foliage alone so that it continues to photosynthesize. Just let it die back naturally. TIP: Plant some fast-growing annuals nearby so that they can camouflage the dying bulb foliage. Petunias, lantana or verbena are good choices for this purpose.

Pinch back chrysanthemums as soon as the new shoots are 4 to 6 inches long. This will encourage lateral branching and a sturdier, more compact shape. Just grasp the growing tip and pinch about ½ to 1 inch of the stem back to a leaf node. The plant will push out new branches from these nodes. Those branches in turn will need to be pinched back by the early part of July. Also, apply slow release granular fertilizer scratched into the soil.

Prune spring-flowering shrubs after they finish blooming. If you put off doing this until later, you run the risk of cutting off buds for next year's blooms. Virginia Cooperative Extension (Va. Coop. Ext) Publication 430-462, "Shrub Pruning Calendar" (pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-462) provides guidance on the best time of year to prune a variety of shrubs.

Lightly fertilize azaleas and rhododendrons after they finish blooming if a soil test indicates that nutrients in the soil are low. Use a fertilizer that is specially formulated for acid-loving plants and follow the directions carefully. Lightly scatter the fertilizer at the edge of the root zone. Azaleas have delicate roots that are close to the soil surface and can be easily burned by excess fertilizer. Too much fertilizer may also

cause scorched leaf margins.

Now that it's spring, it's time to **start monitoring your prized plantings for insect pests** of all kinds - creeping, crawling, flying, etc. If you need to do some sleuthing to figure out what pest has invaded your garden, take a look at Va. Coop. Ext. Publication 2909-1414 (<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/2909/2909-1414/>). It contains a **slide show of insect pests common to ornamental plants in Virginia**, including shade trees, shrubs, flowers and houseplants. The slide show is grouped by insects that (1) feed on plant juices, (2) eat leaves, (3) bore into wood, and (4) produce galls. You will also find information on beneficial insects. Click on each image to learn more about the insect displayed in the photo.

It's time to **move potted houseplants outdoors** now that night-time temperatures are stabilizing above 50° F. To get the plants ready for their summer home, water each one thoroughly. Rinse off the foliage with room-temperature water to remove dust and dirt that may have accumulated over winter. Groom each plant by removing any dead or dying leaves. Re-pot any plants that have outgrown their pots. For plants that don't need to be re-potted, top off the soil with an inch or two of fresh potting soil. Gradually acclimate the plants by placing them in a shady location initially while they adjust to brighter light.

Introduce your children to gardening by giving them a small plot of their own to manage. Show them how to sow seeds. For small children, you might want to start with nasturtium seeds, which are large and easy for little hands to handle. Let the kids help you transplant a few bedding plants, such as petunias, marigolds, geraniums, or begonias. With a little guidance from you, gardening will be a rewarding experience for them and for the whole family. Just don't visibly cringe if your little guy or gal pulls up the petunias to see what the roots look like.

May Vegetable Gardening Tips and Tasks

By Cleve Campbell | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5

May is an exciting time, as **frost fades** into a distant memory, warm weather (but not too hot) finally arrives and **everything wants to grow**. With the right quantity of rainfall and long days, plants are at their happiest. In central Virginia, the **average last frost date** is expected to be around May 10-May 15, which means that May is the month we begin to transplant summer vegetable plants into the vegetable garden — tomatoes, peppers and eggplant along with planting warm season crops such as squash, corn, beans, cucumbers and okra. May is often the busiest month of the year for the vegetable gardener: there's the setting out of transplants, on top of maintaining the early spring-planted crops such as potatoes, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leeks and onions.

May is the time that the vegetable garden fills up with plants in a hurry. And the gardener is always looking for just a little more space, to add that recently-discovered heirloom tomato plant, or that new lettuce that is heat resistant and slow to bolt or that new burnt orange-colored pepper. So many choices, so little space.

The following May planting chart was developed using the [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-331](#) "Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates."

MAY 1-7

Beets
Broccoli*
Cabbage*
Carrots
Swiss Chard
Leeks
Lettuce, bibb
Lettuce, leaf
Onions (set)
Radishes
Sweet Corn

MAY 8-14

Bush, beans
Pole, beans
Beans, wax
Beets
Broccoli*
Cabbage*
Swiss Chard
Lettuce, bibb
Onions (set)
Sweet Corn

MAY 15-24

Beans, bush
Beans, Pole
Beans, Wax
Broccoli*
Swiss Chard
Cucumbers
Eggplant*

MAY 23-31

Beans, Bush
Beans, Pole
Beans, Wax
Cucumbers
Swiss Chard
Eggplant*
Muskmelons

Lettuce, bibb	Onions (set)
Lettuce, leaf	Okra
Onions (set)	Peppers*
Muskmelons	Pumpkins
Peppers*	Squash, Summer
Pumpkins	Squash, Winter
Squash, summer	Sweet Corn
Squash, winter	Sweet Potatoes
Sweet, Corn	Tomatoes*
Sweet Potato	Watermelon
Tomatoes	
Watermelon	

*transplants

Not sure of what varieties of vegetables to plant? Ask a nearby gardening friend what varieties have worked well in their garden. And you'll find **a list of vegetable varieties recommended for Virginia** at [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-480](#).

Extend your harvest season by planting sweet corn and beans every two weeks through the end of June.

Missing corn kernels on your corn ears? This may be the result of **poor pollination**. Sweet corn is wind-pollinated. **Block planting in short rows** (3-4 rows or more) **will pollinate more successfully** than 1 or 2 long rows. When doing succession planting, block the area into the sections. For example, if you have space for 4 rows of corn, rather than planting two long rows of corn and waiting 2 weeks to plant the remaining two rows, divide the area into two blocks and plant 4 short rows. Then two weeks later, plant the remaining 4 short rows. This procedure will insure greater pollination. For more information on growing sweet corn, take a look at [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-405](#).

Keep your potatoes covered. The skins of potatoes exposed to the sunlight will turn green. This green color comes from the pigment chlorophyll produced as a response to sunlight. "Green Potatoes" will often develop a bitter taste and may even become toxic. This can be prevented by covering the exposed potatoes — by hilling-up dirt over the potatoes, or covering them with straw mulch. For additional information on growing potatoes, see [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-413](#)

To control weeds in the garden, **destroy weeds before they develop seeds**. Refrain from cultivating and hoeing deeply; this can cause damage to the shallow roots of your vegetables. Also, avoid using mulch or compost contaminated with seeds. For additional information on controlling weeds in the home garden, see [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-364](#).

When **watermelons, muskmelons, squash and cucumbers** are planted in a hill, **place a stick** upright in the middle of the hill and leave it there. Later in the summer when the hill becomes hidden by the vines, you will know where to water. You'll not only saving time looking for the main root, but you'll be saving water as well.

Successful eggplant development is dependent on a span of temperatures of 80^o-90^oF. and plenty of water. Water well when plants are young. Water at least two times a week when temperatures are high and there is no rain. For additional information on growing eggplant in the home garden, see [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-413](#) .

The best time to transplant tomato, pepper and eggplants, is on a cool cloudy day or late in the afternoon to avoid the hot sun. This way the plants have time to acclimate themselves to their new environment. If the following day is hot and sunny, a row cover may be used to reduce stress on the plant.

When transplanting seedlings in **peat pots**, gently tear off the top inch of the pot; the upper edges of the pot should be covered with soil to avoid wicking water away from the soil surface. Wicking may reduce the amount of moisture available to the roots of the plant.

Break the rule when setting-out tomato plants. The general rule for transplanting most plants is that the planting depth should be no deeper than the soil level they were originally grown in. This rule **does NOT** apply to tomato plants. The general rule for tomatoes is that **2/3 of the tomato plant should be below soil level**. First, gently remove the leaves on the bottom 2/3 of the plant before planting. Planting deep allows roots to sprout along the buried stem (adventitious roots). This results in a better and stronger root system and the end result is better tomatoes. In heavy soil or if you just don't want to dig deep, you can lay the plant on its side, provided that 5-6 inches of soil is placed over the roots and stem. For additional information on growing tomatoes, see VCE Publication 426-418 titled "[Tomatoes](#)" .

Resources:

"Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates." Va. Coop. Ext. Publication No. 426-331, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-331/426-331.html>

"Vegetables Recommended For Virginia," Va. Coop. Ext. Publication No. 426-480, <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-480/426-480.html>

"Sweet Corn," Va. Coop. Ext. Publication No. 426-405, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-405/426-405.html>

"Potatoes, Peppers and Eggplant," Va. Coop. Ext. Publication No. 426-413, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-413/426-413.html>

"Weeds in the Home Garden," Va. Coop. Ext., Publication No. 426-364, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-364/426-364.html>

"Tomatoes," Va. Coop. Ext. Publication No. 426-418, <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-418/426-418.html>

Pavlova: A Light Meringue Nest for the Season's Best

By Cate Whittington | May 2016-Vol.2 No.5





During my senior year in high school, my family hosted an exchange student from Australia. Mary introduced us to the meringue-based dessert named for the renowned Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. For many years, I thought the dessert originated in Australia. However, in searching the Internet, I found that the recipe likely traveled to the United States from Germany. There seems to be no dispute over the continued popularity of this dessert in the Southern hemisphere. Frequently found on Christmas buffets, Pavlova is a refreshing dessert served in the heat of the Australian summer.

When the first strawberries appear on the vine here in Virginia, I begin to dream of pavlova. It is simple and light, a beautiful way to showcase our sweet native berries. The following recipe is courtesy of my adopted sister, Mary Fisher of Sydney.

Pavlova

Serves 8-10

Ingredients

4 egg whites, at room temperature

½ teaspoon vanilla

Pinch of salt

2 teaspoons cornstarch

1 cup sugar

2 cups whipped cream

1-teaspoon white vinegar

Sliced strawberries

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400.
- Beat egg whites with a pinch of salt until stiff.
- Gradually add sugar, vinegar and vanilla.
- Sift cornstarch and fold in lightly.
- Place foil on baking sheet; grease and dust with cornstarch.
- Heap mixture in a circle onto the foil.
- Place in oven and reduce heat immediately to 250. Bake for 1 1/2 hours. Turn off oven and leave meringue there to cool completely before opening the door.
- Once cool, top with whipped cream and sliced fruit.

There are many variations for pavlova. You may flavor the whipped cream or substitute lemon curd for the cream. Kiwi fruit and other berries may be used in addition to or in place of the strawberries. They are all light and delicious!