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What's So Special About Azaleas and Rhododendrons?

By Patsy Chadwick | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

Few landscape shrubs are as widely celebrated and anticipated in the spring garden as azaleas and rhododendrons. Their showy, exuberant displays of color excite the senses and have a way of taking center stage in just about any landscape. If you watched the Masters Golf Tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia, you'll know what I'm talking about. The billowing masses of colorful, mature azaleas and rhododendrons in the background clearly competed with the golfers for the viewer's attention.

Pink-Blooming Azalea

These plants are admired and revered in many countries and across many cultures. In the United States and in Asia, countless azalea festivals are timed to occur when the shrubs are at their showiest. At least two major horticultural societies are devoted to this family of plants. Just about every public botanical garden this side of the Mississippi and even beyond has an azalea and rhododendron collection.

So what's so special about azaleas and rhododendrons? The answer is simple. They are the epitome of spring. A specimen in full bloom has no equal in the spring landscape. When viewed in the garden, they are drop-dead gorgeous in all their various forms and colors. A single specimen is enchanting when viewed close up. A grouping of them viewed at a distance or encountered in a woodland setting is nothing short of

glorious. Their form, habit, and amazing colors dominate the spring landscape.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AZALEAS AND RHODODENDRONS

Azaleas and rhododendrons are native to Asia, Europe and North America and may be either deciduous or evergreen. All evergreen species originally came from Asia and generally tend to be hardy only to Zone 6. The deciduous species are native to this country and tend to be hardy to Zone 4. Of 17 native species, all but two are native to the southeastern part of the United States. They have been extensively hybridized for the past couple of hundred years, resulting in thousands of hybrids, both named and unnamed, with characteristics that don't always clearly identify them as either azalea or rhododendron.

Botanically speaking, azaleas and rhododendrons belong to the genus *Rhododendron*, with azaleas identified as a subspecies of the rhododendron family. According to botanists, there are not enough botanical differences between the two to classify them as two separate species. The American Rhododendron Society describes the plants this way: "All azaleas are rhododendrons but not all rhododendrons are azaleas."

To a novice, it can be difficult to tell the difference between some azaleas and rhododendrons. A case in point is the P.J.M. rhododendron, a hardy variety which is smallish (three-to-five feet) like a typical azalea. It blooms early in spring like an azalea and has small leaves, but the foliage is leathery and evergreen, like rhododendron foliage. The shrub is completely covered with blossoms like an azalea, but it also bears clusters of blossoms in terminal groups like a rhododendron. The number of stamens, however, help identify the shrub as a rhododendron. The characteristics listed below may help you distinguish between the two plants. Bear in mind, however, that these are GENERAL characteristics only and may not hold true for every hybrid or species:

- Bloom time — Excluding the repeat-blooming species, azaleas bloom beginning in April whereas rhododendrons usually bloom later in the spring.
- Flowers — Azaleas have tubular or funnel-shaped flowers. Rhododendron flowers tend to be bell-shaped. Azaleas have one flower per stem but the shrub produces so many stems that the shrub appears covered in blossoms. Rhododendron flowers grow in round clusters at the ends of branches. Both azaleas and rhododendrons have five lobes per flower.
- Stamens — True rhododendrons have ten or more stamens, which amounts to two per lobe. Azaleas have five stamens, or one per lobe.
- Color of flowers – Azaleas come in many shades of white, cream, pink, red, lavender, purple, orange and yellow Their color palette is much broader than that of rhododendrons, which tend to be restricted to white, orchid pink, purple, red and occasionally yellow.
- Foliage – Azalea foliage tends to be elliptical shaped, thin, small and pliable. Most azaleas are deciduous or partly deciduous but many are evergreen, depending on the cultivar and the climate in which the plant is growing. Rhododendron foliage is large, paddle shaped, thick, and evergreen. The underside of the leaves may be scaly and may have small dots.

Thanks to the efforts of both American and Asian hybridizers, thousands of azalea and rhododendron species are available commercially. One garden center in Northern Virginia, for example, carries more than one hundred azalea species in their inventory and about fifty rhododendron species. The choices can be overwhelming. Before buying a plant, consider color, foliage, size and planting site. The bloom time in spring is generally only three-to-four weeks. After that, think about what the foliage will contribute to your landscape. This will help you decide whether you want a deciduous or an evergreen plant. Azaleas tend to average about three-to-five feet in height and width, but bear in mind while some cultivars may be smaller, a lot of them can grow quite large. So keep the final size in mind. Sunlight requirements vary from species to species, but morning sunlight and dappled afternoon shade normally work well for these plants.

There has been a resurgence of interest in azaleas over the past decade or so due to the introduction of the Encore series of re-blooming species. This collection includes more than two dozen choices of single and double blooming cultivars. The initial bloom period occurs in spring with a follow-on show of blooms in summer and yet again in fall. Bloom-a-thon is another series of reblooming azaleas available on the market with reblooming characteristics similar to the Encore series. Should you choose a reblooming azalea for your garden, keep in mind how the color will work (or not) with your landscape throughout the entire growing season.

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

- Soil pH – Both azaleas and rhododendrons thrive best in acidic soil with a pH of 4.5 to 6.0. If in doubt, a soil test should be done before planting. If the pH is too high, apply a small amount of agricultural sulfur or iron sulfate. Conversely, if the pH is too low, apply ground limestone. See Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-602, "Growing Azaleas and Rhododendrons," for guidance on fertilization (https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426-602/426-602.html).
- Sunlight – Azaleas and rhododendrons prefer a cool site with filtered sunlight. They can tolerate morning sun but will fare best if protected from strong afternoon sun. If the only site available receives full sun, then choose a deciduous azalea, which can tolerate more sun than its evergreen cousins.
- Water – Azaleas have shallow roots which should be irrigated during dry periods. A soaker hose or drip irrigation is the best choice to slowly water the plants. Overhead irrigation is not a good idea because it can promote foliar diseases. Don't over water the plant. Too much moisture can cause the plant to be susceptible to root rot diseases.
- Mulch — Layer two-to-three inches of organic mulch over the root ball. Use pine straw, composted pine bark or decomposed oak leaves. All will enrich the soil as they decompose. Be careful to keep the mulch a couple of inches away from the main stem.
- Fertilizer – Azaleas and rhododendrons generally require little nutritional supplementation. But if a soil test indicates the need for fertilizer, use one that is especially formulated for azaleas and rhododendrons and apply carefully to avoid damaging the fine roots. A fertilizer that supplies ammonium nitrogen is a good choice. Cottonseed meal is also recommended as a suitable fertilizer. Fertilize in early spring when moisture is plentiful.
- Pests – The most common pests affecting azaleas are lacebugs and spider mites. In my experience, lacebugs tend to attack azaleas that are planted in full sun. Good cultural practices are the best defense against these problems. Careful plant location, good soil aeration, good drainage, careful mulching and watering habits all collectively help fight pests and disease.
- Diseases — Azaleas are subject to leafy gall, which can be destructive to the leaves in the early spring. The best method of controlling the problem is to hand pick infected leaves. Azaleas and rhododendrons are also subject to phytophthora root rot in moist, hot conditions.
- Deadheading — Most azaleas are self-cleaning. The blossoms turn brown, which can look unattractive for a few days, but then they drop off and disappear into the mulch.
- Pruning — Prune azaleas after they have finished flowering. New flower buds for next year's blooms are set by midsummer. If pruned after say mid-June, the plant may not produce any blooms next spring. Prune individual branches back to a spot where they join a larger branch. If the plant is overgrown and needs to be reduced in size, cut large branches back. New growth will spring from the stubs that remain.

HOW TO PLANT

- Soil — Azaleas and rhododendrons thrive best in moist but well-drained soil that is acidic and rich in organic matter.

- Location – choose a site sloping to the north or to the east in order to protect the plant from drying south or west winds. Winter winds tend to evaporate water from the leaves of evergreen azaleas and rhododendrons. If the ground is frozen, the water cannot be replaced. As a result, the leaves may be damaged and may turn brown.
- Soil Preparation — Azaleas and rhododendrons have very delicate, shallow root systems and struggle to penetrate our heavy Virginia red clay. Dig the planting hole at least twice the width of the root ball but no deeper than the root ball. Position the plant either at the same depth as it was in the container or one-to-two inches higher than the surrounding soil.
- Drainage – Good drainage is vital to the health of these plants. Since this is particularly important for shallow-rooted plants, it is best to amend heavy clay with good quality, loamy topsoil throughout the entire planting site.
- Mulch – Two-to-three inches of mulch will keep the root ball cool and moist. Just make sure the mulch is pulled away from the main stem by at least a couple of inches. Replace or replenish mulch in the fall before a hard freeze.

AZALEA AND RHODODENDRON COLLECTIONS IN BOTANICAL GARDENS

Azaleas and rhododendrons are so popular on the east coast that it is impossible to name all the collections that are available without expanding this article to an unmanageable length. Of the many options available, a few that are within driving distance of Charlottesville include:

- Norfolk Botanical Garden – Their collection of azaleas and rhododendrons numbers approximately 3,800 plants in the rhododendron genus representing 558 different species and cultivars. Their collection is scattered throughout the garden, so wear comfortable walking shoes if you visit.
- The United States National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. — This arboretum is one of the capital's must-see attractions at any time of year but particularly when the azaleas and rhododendrons are in full bloom. Former arboretum Director Benjamin Y. Morrison is personally responsible for developing hundreds of hybrids and you will not be disappointed if you decide to tour their collection. Check out their website for a weekly update on what's in bloom.
- Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden — This nearby botanical garden in Richmond features members of the rhododendron genus throughout the gardens, along paths, and near water, where they are displayed to best advantage.

The west coast also offers a number of botanical gardens with impressive collections of rhododendrons. Many of the specimens on display are at least 40 feet tall – a monstrous size compared to their East Coast cousins. The interesting thing about these plant specimens is that some of them are endangered while others are extinct in their native habitats.

RESOURCES

Azalea Society of America (http://azaleas.org)

American Rhododendron Society (http://www.rhododendron.org)

The United States National Arboretum (www.usna.usda.gov)

The Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens (www.gardenbythesea/org)

Virginia Cooperative Extension (www.ext.vt.edu)

Clemson University (http://www.clemson.edu)

The Edible Garden Tips and Tasks-May

By Cleve Campbell | May 2015 - Vol. 1 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: the setting out of transplants, on top of maintaining the early spring-planted crops such as potatoes, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leeks and onions just to name a few.

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	**MAY 8-14**
Beets	Bush, beans
Broccoli*	Pole, beans
Cabbage*	Beans, wax
Carrots	Beets
Swiss Chard	Broccoli*
Leeks	Cabbage*
Lettuce, bibb	Swiss Chard
Lettuce, leaf	Lettuce, bibb
Onions (set)	Onions (set)
Radishes	Sweet Corn
Sweet Corn	
MAY15-24	**May 23-31**
Beans, bush	Beans, Bush
Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole
Beans, Wax	Beans, Wax
Broccoli*	Cucumbers
Swiss Chard	Swiss Chard
Cucumbers	Eggplant*
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 Potatoes	Watermelon
Tomatoes	
Watermelon	

Not sure of what varieties of vegetables to plant? Ask a nearby gardening friend what works in their garden and visit Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-480 for a list of vegetable varieties recommended for Virginia.

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 (2) long rows of corn and waiting 2 weeks to plant the remaining two (2) rows, divide the area into two (2) 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 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 456-018.

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 (80-90 degrees F) 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."

“Poison Apple”?

By Cleve Campbell | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

This is the story of an edible which evolved from a horticultural villain into a hero, the star of the vegetable garden. It’s hard to believe but I’m talking about the tomato, which was once known as the “poison apple,” Today the tomato is arguably the most popular plant in the vegetable garden, and often grown even by non-vegetable gardeners in the side yard, beside the house, or even in pots on patios, decks, and even in hanging planters.

I don’t think summer would be complete without tasting the sun from a vine-ripened tomato, plucked fresh from the garden. Today we eat the versatile tomato raw, like an apple, on sandwiches, in salads, in soups, juiced, in sauces, grilled or stewed. It would be hard to imagine any home garden that did not have a few tomato plants. Today, tomatoes are considered by many to be the most prized vegetable in the garden. But, the **history of the tomato** reveals that this was not always the case,. This wonderful taste of summer was for over 200 years thought of as a poison apple and grown only as an ornamental plant!

The **tomato originated** here in the Americas, and in the early 16th century, Spanish conquistadors returning from Mexico were thought to have first introduced the seeds in southern Europe. Some researchers credit Cortez with bringing the seeds to Europe in 1519. The perception that tomatoes were poisonous may have arisen because the plant belongs to the Nightshade plant family — of which some species are indeed poisonous. A second reason that is often cited is that when aristocrats ate tomatoes, they become ill and often died, but this was a case of misplaced blame because wealthy Europeans often used pewter plates that

had a high content of lead. Tomatoes, being high in acid, would leach lead from the pewter plate, resulting in illness or even death by lead poisoning.

The legal profession then added its own twist to the saga of the tomato. Many gardeners think of the **tomato as a vegetable but technically (botanically) it is a fruit.** This confusion may have arisen because tomatoes are often used in the kitchen as a vegetable. In 1893, the United States Supreme Court, in the case of Nix vs Hedden , unanimously ruled that a tomato should be taxed as a vegetable rather than a fruit (lower tax rate on fruit), because it was used in the kitchen as a vegetable; therefore, it should be taxed as a vegetable. Thus, in the minds of many, the tomato became a vegetable.

May is the month that the gardener carefully **transplants tomato plants into the garden** and begins the long wait to savor that first homegrown tomato taste.

But before we can transplant those tomato plants into the garden, we must wait until the danger of frost has passed, which in our area in Central Virginia is May 15th. Many of my conservative gardening friends wait a full week after the final frost date; they know that May 15th is only the **average last frost date**. Tomatoes are warm season plants that grow best at temperatures of 70-80 degrees F.

Choose a **sunny location** as tomatoes require at least 8 hours of sunlight each day.

Tomatoes prefer **soil that is well drained and amended heavily with organic matter.** Decomposed manures, compost, peat or other humus can be tilled into the garden site as soon as the soils can be worked in the spring.

Tomatoes require a soil with a pH around 6.5. The pH is the general measurement of acidity in the soil. A soil test is the best way to determine the pH of your tomato patch. Soil testing kits can be obtained through your local county extension office. If the pH of the soil is too low or acid, add dolomitic limestone in accordance with the soil test recommendations. In addition to adjusting the pH, dolomitic limestone also provides calcium and magnesium, both important elements for the growth and health of the tomato plants. If possible it is recommended that **lime be applied several months before planting** to allow time for the lime to react with the soil and adjust the pH. Additional soil testing information can also be obtained from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 452-125.

As with any gardening activity, a little planning will often provide that edge in growing a successful tomato crop. In deciding what tomato varieties you want to plant, think about your goal. Is your goal to have the first ripe tomato in the neighborhood? Or do you wish to produce an adequate crop for eating thoughout the season? Or perhaps you want even more tomatoes — enough not only for summer eating but also for preserving, i.e., canning, making juice, salsa, and sauces. With your goal in mind, you can decide how much room to allocate to tomatoes — how large a garden footprint to dedicate to growing tomatoes. A general rule of thumb is that a healthy tomato plant can produce 10-15 pounds of tomatoes over the growing season and will require approximately 3 square feet of space.

The **varieties of tomatoes** range in the hundreds and can often be overwhelming to a new gardener: gather information from gardening friends for their favorites, the varieties that dwell in our area. Another source of information for selecting tomato varieties is found in Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-480, an article titled “Vegetables Recommended for Virginia.” Also, it is helpful to keep a journal and make notes on which varieties performed well — and which did not — to be used in selecting future varieties.

Tomatoes varieties are differentiated by plant characteristics and fruit characteristics. Plant characteristics are used to describe the plant, whereas fruit characteristics are terms used to describe the fruit size and color. Following is a brief overview of these two characteristics:

Tomatoes based on plant characteristics:

- **Midget, patio or dwarf tomato plants** are very compact vines that are usually grown in containers or hanging planters. The tomatoes produced by these types or plants are often cherry tomatoes but not always. These plants are usually short lived, producing their crop quickly and for a short period.
- **Determinate or Compact tomato plants** have a compact bush form and produce most of their crop at one time. A determinate plant will produce tomatoes for two to five harvests. In Virginia a determinate plant will not produce tomatoes throughout the summer. Determinate types ripen their fruit over a short period of time, so successive plantings may be desirable to keep the harvest coming through the entire season, The short ripening period of all the fruit is a trait that facilitates harvesting for large producers, so many determinate varieties were developed by tomato processing companies. Similarly, determinate plants are often the choice of the gardener who wants a large supply of ripe fruit at once for canning.
- **Indeterminate varieties** set fruit clusters along the vine stem that continues to grow all season. They will continue to produce fruit, if harvested throughout the season, until the first frost or disease kills the vine. This is the type of all- season tomatoes that most vegetable gardeners like to grow. Indeterminate plants perform best when provided some type of support such as stakes or wire cages. The supports keep the fruit from contacting the soil, helping to prevent fruit rot.

Tomato Types based on fruit characteristics:

- **Cherry tomatoes** have small, cherry-sized fruits — usually about 1-inch diameter — that are usually grown to be eaten in salads. Plant size can vary from dwarf to seven-footers depending on the variety. Cherry tomatoes are generally sweeter than the larger types. The dwarf or compact plant varieties are ideal for containers. Cherry tomato plants are often heavy producers, so one or two plants are usually sufficient for the home garden.
- **Standard Tomatoes** usually are smooth and round, and are larger in size than cherry tomatoes. Also called slicing or main season tomatoes, this group includes well known cultivars such as Better Boy, Celebrity, Early Girl and Rutgers.
- **Beefsteak types** are large fruit types, sometimes weighing as much as two pounds or more. These cultivars are usually late to ripen; home gardeners often plant some standard or early tomatoes for early harvest.
- **Paste (Roma type) tomatoes** have a pear or elongated shape with a thick, somewhat dry flesh with few seeds. Paste tomatoes are less juicy than standard or beefsteak tomatoes. Paste tomatoes are a favorite for processing into sauces and tomato paste and for canning since they do not need to be cut, and because they are meatier than standard tomatoes, they are often canned whole.
- **Colors —** yes, tomatoes come in many colors other than red **—** yellow, orange, yellow, dark reddish purple, green and striped. Many specific colors are heritage or heirloom varieties. Tests have shown there is no correlation between color and the acidity of tomatoes.

Most gardeners want to maximize the tomato harvest season, and the time period between planting and harvesting can vary greatly. Most seed packets and catalogs indicate the a number of "days to harvest" for individual tomato varieties. In general, **days to harvest** is the number of days from the time the transplants are planted in the garden until one can expect ripe fruit from that individual tomato variety. For example,

the days to harvest for the Early Girl variety is 57 days; for the Better Boy variety, it is 75 days, while for the Pineapple variety it is 85-90 days. By planting different varieties with different days to harvest, the gardener can plan a longer harvest season. Remember that **days to harvest** is only an estimate, and may vary greatly from year to year. That's because tomatoes are heat-loving plants, and the ripening of fruit may be slowed down by a string of overcast days, or prolonged cool spells. Thus, the days to harvest is a very soft estimate.[1]

Hybrid and Heirloom tomatoes:

Hybrids- Many tomatoes on the market today are hybrid tomatoes. A hybrid is the result of crossing two different plant varieties with the goal of combining the attributes of the parent plants and possibly obtaining more favorable traits than either of the parents. Many hybrids are bred to be disease resistant, produce good fruit size and shape, and increased yields.

Many new hybrid cultivars are **resistant** to or tolerant of some tomato **diseases**. This is indicated by a letter or combination of letters following the tomato name, such as **F** (Fusarium Wilts Race 1), **As** (Early Blight), **FF** (Fusarium Wilt Race 1 and Race 2), **B** (Bacterial speck *Pseudomonas)*, **N** (Root-knot Nematodes), **L** (Septoria leaf spot), **T** (Tobacco Mosaic Virus), **St** (Stemphylium Gray leaf spot), **A** (Alternaria Stem Canker/Crown Wilt).

Heirloom– Increasing in popularity today are heirloom tomatoes. The definition of an heirloom tomato varies, but the term usually refers to an "open pollinated" variety that was in cultivation **prior to 1940**, when the first hybrid cultivars become available. Often heirlooms have been passed down within families or communities for many years, with seed saved from the best plants each year. All heirlooms are **open pollinated**. Open pollinated plants, when isolated from other tomato varieties, will grow true seeds each year and their seed can be saved with the expectation of the same plant and fruit quality each year.

Although open-pollinated heirloom cultivars have become very popular, many have little genetic resistance to common diseases and in general are not as productive as hybrid cultivars.

Planting Tomato Plants:

When you are selecting plants to be transplanted into the ground, select plants that have a fat stem and are about 6 to 10 inches tall. **Unlike many vegetable plants, tomato plants should be planted deep.** To do this, first gently remove all but the top two or three sets of leaves from the stem. The hole should be dug deep enough so only the remaining leaves on the stem are above ground. If the transplant is leggy, remove all the leaves except the top two or three true leaves and plant the stem horizontally. Roots will form along the stem, producing a stronger plant. Do not remove the plant from the container if the container is paper or a peat pot. Remove only the top inch from the container and make sure the pot is buried below the surface of the soil, to prevent the container from wicking away water from the plant. If the transplant is in a non-biodegradable plastic container, gently remove the plant from the container before planting; gently loosen the roots. Once the transplant is in the hole, press the soil firmly around the transplant so that a slight depression is formed for holding water. Pour approximately one pint of starter solution or diluted fish emulsion around each plant to wash the soil around the roots. Mulch with leaves, or straw around the tomato plant to maintain moisture and control weeds.

Take your time with harvesting. It's often tempting to pick a tomato that is just starting to turn and bring it in the house to finish ripening on the window sill, but a perfect ripe home grown tomato eaten sun warm is unrecognizable from those eaten from the window sill or purchased from the local store.

Happy tomato-growing, and please join us in The Garden Shed next month for our article on tomato pests

and diseases.

Resources:

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Baptisia – Both Beautiful and Indestructible!

By Patsy Chadwick | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

If you are looking for a plant that is both beautiful AND indestructible for your spring landscape, consider investing in *Baptisia australis*. But first, a little background: The name, in case you're interested, is derived from the ancient Greek word *bapto*, meaning "to dip" or "immerse." The specific name *australis* comes from the Latin word for "southern." Early settlers in this country made blue dye from this plant, using it as a substitute for the true indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*), which is from India. Thus, the plant became known as blue false indigo. It is native to the eastern and mid-western areas of the United States and is known by more than a half dozen common names. Some people know it as wild indigo, rattleweed, or rattlebush. Others know it simply as *Baptisia* (pronounced bap-TIZ-ee-ah). Regardless of what it's called, this plant has a lot to offer both in terms of floral display and foliage.

DESCRIPTION

Whether planted as a single specimen or as a grouping, false indigo provides multi-season interest in the ornamental garden. A member of the legume family, its blue-green trifoliate foliage and blue-purple blossoms harmonize beautifully in the spring landscape. The attractive, upright, shrubby form and foliage add pleasing color and texture to the landscape even after the flowers have long disappeared. This easy-care plant looks stunning by itself but it also makes a great companion for peonies, roses, bearded iris, lady's mantle, or allium. In the fall, the blue-green foliage complements many gold-flowering plants, such as black-eyed Susan and sneezeweed.

Depending on the cultivar, false indigo typically blooms for about three to six weeks in late spring to early summer. The blossoms measure about one inch in length and appear on long racemes measuring up to a foot or more in length. The plant provides nectar to a variety of butterflies and pollinators, which makes it very valuable in the landscape. Even hummingbirds are attracted to the blooms. After the blossoms fade, light green "pea pods" form along the flower stalks and gradually turn an attractive dark gray or black in late summer. The pods make interesting additions to fall flower arrangements.

False indigo is generally easy to find at local garden centers or through plant catalogs and, of course, on-line. While the species is an attractive plant in its own right, several breeding programs have expanded the *Baptisia* color palette and introduced some interesting alternatives to the straight species. The North Carolina Botanical Garden's breeding program, for example, introduced two of the most popular hybrids on the market today:

- 'Purple Smoke' – Blossoms have a smoky purple eye in the center of violet-blue flowers. Introduced in 1996, this hybrid is widely available commercially and is the best known of the hybrid forms.
- 'Carolina Moonlight' – Soft butter yellow flowers. Introduced in 2002, this hybrid is a cross between white-blooming *B. alba* and yellow-blooming *B. sphaerocarpa*, which are both native species.

Over the course of more than a decade, mid-western plant hybridizer Hans Hansen of Walters Gardens, Inc., developed a series of false indigos that are more compact than the species and have unique flower coloration. Sold through the Proven Winners "Decadence Series" perennial program, the names will make you salivate:

- 'Blueberry Sundae' – Deep indigo blue, which is more vibrant in color than the native species.
- 'Cherries Jubilee' – Maroon and yellow blossoms that age to gold.
- 'Dutch Chocolate' — Deep brownish purple.
- 'Lemon Meringue' – Bright lemon yellow.
- 'Vanilla Cream' – Soft pastel yellow opening to creamy vanilla white.

Between 2006 and 2009, Dr. Jim Ault, a hybridizer at the Chicago Botanic Garden, introduced the following hybrids, which are sold as the "Prairieblues™" series:

- 'Twilite' — Deep purple tinged with butter yellow edges.
- 'Starlite' – Soft blue with creamy white at the base of each blossom.
- 'Midnight' – Deep violet blue.
- 'Solar Flare' – Bright yellow fading to deep orange.

'Screaming Yellow' is a selection of yellow wild indigo (*B. sphaerocarpa)* that is also easily obtained commercially. However, the name suggests that the color may be jarring, so try to find a specimen in bloom before you purchase it to make sure you like it. More compact than 'Carolina Moonlight,' 'Screaming Yellow' has more vibrant yellow blossoms and blooms with a more profuse flower display.

If a paler palette is more to your liking, look for *Baptisia alba*, *B. lactea*, or *B. leucantha*, all of which have white or creamy white flowers.

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

False indigo is a long-lived plant that is both cold hardy and drought tolerant. These characteristics make it useful in landscapes ranging from cold, blustery Zone 3 to hot, humid Zone 9. Once established, it can grow to three or four feet or more in height and width, so give it plenty of room in the garden. In appearance, a well-established specimen looks like a small multi-stemmed shrub but it dies back to soil level in the late fall. It is not fussy about soil pH, but it is happiest when planted in well-drained neutral to slightly acid soil.

Two issues can cause false indigo to split in the middle or flop over: insufficient sunlight and the weight of the pods. To solve the first problem, site the plant where it will receive a minimum of 6 hours of full sun. To solve the second problem, shear back the plant by about a third after it finishes blooming. This will remove the pods that form after the plant finishes blooming.

Plan well when planting false indigo. It has a long tap root which contributes to the plant's hardiness and drought tolerance but makes it very difficult to move the plant after the first year or two in the ground. The deep root mass also makes it difficult to divide the plant. So, it is best left alone.

Because it is a member of the legume family, false indigo fixes nitrogen in the soil. In other words, this means that the plant can convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can use as a nutrient.

False indigo has few pests or diseases. Deer, rabbits and groundhogs rarely bother it. Butterfly larvae may strip some foliage from the plant, but the plant generally survives with no ill effects. Fungal diseases such as leaf spot, powdery mildew, or rust can occur if the plant is crowded or grown in damp conditions. To prevent these diseases, give the plant plenty of space in well-drained soil.

In summary, false indigo has it all. It is beautiful, hardy, disease and pest free, and particularly easy to care for. It thrives in average, well-drained soil in full sun. It does not need to be fertilized, nor does it need to be deadheaded or divided. Either cut the foliage back to the ground in the fall, or leave it in place over winter. The choice depends on your personal aesthetic. Then, just sit back and enjoy the show for many years to come.

RESOURCES

North Carolina Botanical Garden (http://ncbg.unc.edu/plant-introductions/).

Chicago Botanic Garden (http://www.chicagobotanic.org/).

Walters Gardens Hybridizers (http://www.waltersgardens.com/).

United States Department of Agriculture Plants Database (http://plants.USDA.gov/).

Clausen, Ruth Rogers, *50 Beautiful Deer-Resistant Plants*, 2011.

DiSabato-Aust, Tracy, *50 High-Impact, Low-Care Garden Plants*, 2008.

Mellichamp, Larry, *Native Plants of the Southeast*, 2014.

The Ornamental Garden in May

By Patsy Chadwick | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

May is the month when nighttime frosts fade into distant memory, the sun feels warm on bare arms, and the ornamental garden bursts into glorious bloom. Peonies rule in mid-May with their gaudy masses of huge white, pink or red blossoms. As if they aren't eye catching enough, jaunty irises compete with the peonies for attention. Late-blooming tulips carpet the earth in jewel-toned colors. Ornamental *Alliums*, with their otherworldly globular blooms, rise in salute above their neighbors. Lest you be distracted by this riot of color, there's much to be done in the ornamental garden. So let's get started.

Normally, there's plenty of rain in May. But should there be an absence of precipitation, **water your landscape plants deeply and infrequently** at a rate of about one inch per week. This is particularly important for new plantings, but it is also essential for maintaining healthy plants throughout the growing season. Even drought-tolerant plants require moisture their first year while they are getting established.

May is a good time to **plant a ground cover**. If you have a slope, a ground cover will help prevent erosion. If it's too shady in an area of your lawn for grass to grow, a ground cover may be a good alternative. There are lots of shade-loving options available including *Asarum* (wild ginger), *Galium odoratum* (sweet woodruff), *Epimedium* (barrenwort), and *Heuchera* (coral bells). Some suggested sun-loving ground covers include creeping thyme, creeping *Phlox*, creeping oregano, *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* (plumbago), *Sedum*, and *Stachys byzantine* (lambs ears).

As cool season plants such as violas or pansies begin to wane, replace them with **heat-loving plants**. *Melampodium* (butter daisy), *Gomphrena* (globe amaranth), annual *Salvia* (sage), *Zinnia*, *Tithonia* (Mexican sunflower), *Lantana*, *Tagetes* (marigold), *Cleome* (spider flower), and *Verbena* are a few "tough-as-nails" annuals that are generally heat and drought tolerant in this area. Direct sow seeds now or, if you're transplanting seedlings, make sure they are hardened off before you plant them.

Plant **tender bulbs** such as *Dahlia*, *Gladiolus*, *Canna* lily, and *Alocasia* (elephant's ear) in a sunny spot after the danger of frost has passed. If you don't have enough sun, then try planting shade-loving C*aladium* or tuberous *Begonia*. Or try elephant's ears in part-shade but make sure you have enough room in your landscape for these behemoths. Depending on the variety, they can grow seriously huge!

Now that the temperatures are consistently warm, the bugs and other creepy crawlies are out in force. Check plants for **aphids** and treat early before they take over your plants. If lady bugs are present, they may take care of your aphid problem for you. No lady bugs? Then spray the aphids with a stream of water that is strong enough to knock them off the plant but not strong enough to damage the plant. If that doesn't reduce the aphid population to a manageable size, spray with a small amount of insecticidal soap. You can make your own insecticidal soap by mixing one tablespoon of liquid or all-natural soap, such as pure castile soap, with one quart of water in a clean spray bottle. Do not use dishwashing detergents or liquids that contain additives such as fragrance, degreaser or bleach. Test on a few leaves first to make sure the solution does not harm your plant.

Inspect tender young *Hosta* foliage for **slug damage** (holes in foliage). Slugs can do a lot of damage in just one night. They are normally nocturnal and may not be visible during the day. Several products are available commercially for controlling slugs, but before using any of them, make sure you read the label and follow the instructions carefully. Finely crushed eggshells sprinkled around each plant also work well. Slugs don't like crawling over the sharp edges. Or, place a shallow dish filled with beer at the base of the plant.

Slugs will crawl into the dish and drown in the beer. End of problem.

If you see **ants** crawling on your peonies, don't worry. Ants are merely attracted to the honeydew on the peony buds and aren't harming the plant. If you cut a few peony stems for flower arrangements, inspect the blossoms and remove any ants you find before you bring the flowers into your house.

A word of warning: **ticks** are active now so be alert for them. Check yourself, your children, and your pets after you or they have spent time outdoors. As a preventative measure, wear long pants, closed shoes and socks when working in the garden. Ticks are easier to spot on light color clothing.

Install supports for fast-growing plants that tend to flop. Use stakes and loose ties for delphiniums or foxgloves. Stake dahlias when you plant them. Larger varieties of dahlias tend to fall over, particularly if they are located in a windy spot. Staking them at the time they are planted prevents damage to the tubers. TIP: "Grow-through" ring-style supports work well for peonies and should be installed while the peony foliage is still emerging from the ground. Otherwise, you'll find it next to impossible to cage the plant after the foliage matures.

Alas, **weeding** is an ongoing task but it's important to keep weeds under control on a continuing basis. Weeds grow fast and they seem to spring up the minute you turn your back on your garden. A few minutes spent weeding every other day or so is time well spent. If you haven't already applied mulch, spread a layer now to help keep weeds from sprouting. Mulch will also moderate soil temperatures and and retain moisture. Your plants will thank you for your thoughtfulness during the heat of July and August.

Finish acclimating your **houseplants** to the outdoors but keep a close eye on them so that they don't become sunburned. Make sure each pot has a drainage hole. If it doesn't, re-pot the plant into one that does. Lack of drainage is an invitation for root rot.

Pinch out the tops of **chrysanthemums** when the plants are about four inches high. This will result in a bushier, sturdier, more wind-resistant plant later in the season. **Asters** also benefit from a pinching now.

Prune spring-flowering shrubs after they finish blooming. Many spring–flowering shrubs, such as azaleas, set next-year's flower buds soon after they finish blooming in the current year. If you wait too long to prune, you run the risk of not having any blossoms next year.

If you need a vertical accent in your garden but aren't ready to commit to a perennial vine, try growing an **annual vine** such as hyacinth bean, morning glory, or cardinal climber.

The garden centers are filled with lots of interesting **container plant choices** right now. Take advantage before all the good plants are gone and try planting a container garden. If you've never planted one before and are a little nervous about it, relax. Just keep in mind the "thriller, filler, spiller" concept: plant something tall to act as a focal point; something mid-size to fill in around the "thriller;" and something low that cascades over the rim of the pot and softens the overall effect. Have fun experimenting with color combinations and textures! Just remember to keep container gardens well watered over the growing season.

May Lawn Care

By Melanie | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

Quality lawns in Virginia can be challenging, especially during the hot, humid summers. Virginia is located in a transition zone for turfgrasses, and our climate can be harsh on grass in both winter and summer. Turf grass varieties fall into two categories: cool-season and warm-season. Cool-season grasses most commonly used here are Kentucky bluegrass, rye and fescue. They grow strong enough and deep enough to cope with our hot summers and cold winters and provide green winter color. Warm-season grasses, such as zoysia grass and bermuda grass, are sun tough, and drought and humidity tolerant. However, they do go dormant in the winter, making for a brown lawn until spring.

Cool-season grasses are best adapted to the Piedmont region, the Blue Ridge, and mountainous regions of Virginia, but they struggle during the heat and drought of the summer months. In the spring as the soil temperatures go into the 50s (F), they will be the first to resume active growth. Even the early spring low temperatures (including frost and snow) rarely slow the blade growth. The lush, green color we see now is the plant's effort to quickly maximize its ability to make food, i.e., photosynthesis. The remaining winter food reserves are used to make the leaves. The root system will eventually catch up later in the spring, and usually the lawn balances out the needs for both shoots and roots.

However tempting it is to have the best looking lawn earlier than anyone on your block, altering this balance of growth between shoots and roots can cause more problems. Some ready-made programs that I call "step programs" are often sold in box stores as well as in agricultural stores. The bag contains several amendments that are labeled "Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5" and the instructions tell you when to put down each "step" spaced over the course of the year. Most of the "step" programs sold on the market contain higher than recommended levels of nitrogen for midspring and summer. This higher amount of nitrogen may produce a lush green lawn initially, but at the expense of the root system. The development and maintenance of a

strong root system will be critical to turf success for the remainder of the season, especially when the stress of high temperatures begin.

Mowing

No matter which type of grass you have, the two most important maintenance tasks to perform are mowing — to the **proper mowing height —** and irrigation — at the **correct frequency and depth of irrigation**. Have you ever wondered what would happen if you didn't mow your lawn? We spend time and money getting it to grow only to cut it again and again. If we did not mow, the grass could grow up to 24″ in height depending on the type. As it grows, it would begin the natural process of sexual reproduction. The grass would then produce "flowers" in the form of green, wiry, stiff stems and are a major source of allergy producing pollen. After flowering, the seeds would set, ripen and fall. Wind and foot traffic then bends over the leaf blades and flower stems, making the lawn look neglected, which it is!

It would also thin out. The reason for this thinning is that the tip of each grass blade contains hormones that repress horizontal growth. Cutting off the tips with mowing removes the hormones and allows the grass to spread outward. The other obvious benefit of mowing is it makes your lawn look better. The spring mowing removes damaged and brown tips. It also helps deter weeds by keeping the turf thick with no holes for weeds to invade.

However, mowing can also be destructive. The cut end of each blade is a site for pathogens to enter. Mower blades that are not sharp will cause even more damage. Every mowing is a bit of a shock, which forces grass to put its energy into growing new leaves rather than roots. Mown grass also stores fewer carbohydrates. These carbohydrates help lawns survive stressful periods such as heat and draught.

One of the most common mowing mistakes is cutting the lawn too short. Never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at any one time. According to Dr. Mike Goatley, VA Tech's turf grass specialist, cutting grass any more will "shock the plant and force it to redirect food resources from roots and stems toward new leaves." Set your mower height at least 3" high for cool season grasses and 1.5-2" for warm season grasses. You need to mow cool-season grasses more in the spring and fall and warm-season grasses in the summer. Many people just mow every Saturday, but flexibility is the key.

Other mowing tips include the following:

- vary your mowing pattern. Always mowing in the same direction can compact the soil. Grass leans or grows in the direction it is mowed; altering directions will help keep it upright.
- avoid cutting wet grass. The cut will be uneven and the clippings will clog the mower. It also is potentially dangerous especially if mowing on a slope.
- mow slopes on a diagonal
- avoid scalping high spots if ground is uneven
- mow in the morning after the dew dries; avoid mowing when the sun is at full strength

Watering

Your lawn can live with deficiencies of nutrients and minerals, overcast days and even Virginia clay, but it cannot survive without water. How much and when it needs water are important issues if grass is to thrive. Understanding these needs starts with understanding how plants use water.

Grass plants bring in water through their roots and it doesn't stay there long. Water is consumed during the photosynthesis process as it breaks down carbohydrates for energy. Like us, grass plants increase the metabolic process in warm weather. Unless the temperature gets so hot that the plant actually goes

dormant, the hotter and drier the weather, the more water it will need to stay healthy. As the weather warms, and photosynthesis increases, plants need more water. Blades also lose water in a manner similar to human sweating in a process called transpiration. Water helps to keep the blades upright and strong as water moves up but also out.

Roots grow to find water. Deep, infrequent watering is best for a healthy root system and also reduces weeds and diseases. Do not wait until the grass is brown to water as this depletes energy reserves and stresses the grass. If you water frequently and briefly, the roots do not have to grow far to find water, thus remaining shallow. This retards root growth, which affects uptake of nutrients and leads to scraggly growth. Roots that lack moisture, stretch out looking for moisture and the structure and density are diminished. This can also leave the top growth limp.

In general, a lawn needs 1" of water/week when not dormant, especially as the temperature rises. If it is very hot outside, stay off the grass since that stresses the lawn. Placing a rain gauge outside will help to estimate the amount of rainfall. Lawns that are less than 12 months old, may initially require more frequent watering. Water early in the morning (4-8AM) when there will be less evaporation. Avoid watering sidewalks, driveways and roadways.

If rainfall is inadequate, irrigation systems or sprinklers can be used. When selecting sprinklers, select one that keeps water close to the ground where evaporation will be less. To determine how long to run a sprinkler system, place 8-10 tuna or cat food cans around the sprinkler range and let it run for 15 minutes. Measure the amount of water in the cans, and by multiplying this amount by 4, you will roughly have the hourly rate of the sprinkler.

Conserving water

Whether you want to help the environment or lessen your bill, water conservation is a pressing concern for all of us. If you have a cool-season lawn, you'll need to decide whether you allow it to go dormant in the summer heat–its natural state– or if you want to keep it green by using precious resources to hydrate it artificially. Dormancy is not death but even a dormant lawn needs about 1/4″ of rain every other week. To determine whether your lawn is going dormant, look for a bluish-gray cast to the overall lawn, inward folding blades and footprints that remain when someone walks across the lawn. Do not fertilize under these conditions as that causes additional stress.

Tips for better watering

- Collect rain water in cisterns or rain barrels to use for irrigation
- Water the lawn early in the morning (4-8AM)
- Take into account how much rain has fallen
- Pull back on watering when the weather is cloudy and overcast or there's high humidity and little wind
- Water more if there are long periods of intense sunlight, high winds, dry conditions and warmer-than-usual temperatures
- Avoid large spring applications of fertilizer — this lush lawn will require more water
- Use timers connected between the spigot and the hose end in order to be sure sprinklers only run the minimum amount of time. It is too easy to forget that they are on.

- With our clay soils, it is nearly impossible to do 1″ of water at one setting. Split it into 1/2″ of water 2 times/week.
- Core aeration can loosen compacted soil allowing water to infiltrate deeper, but do this in the fall
- Consider more drought-resistant grasses such as warm-season grasses

Remember that everything we do to our lawns and landscapes affects local water quality and that of the Chesapeake Bay. For further assistance, call the Help Desk of the Albemarle/Charlottesville unit of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office at **434-872-4580.**

Resources

A Lawn to Dye For-How to Create a Perfect Lawn: Mowing Your Lawn by Shawn Askew, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication at http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/CSES/CSES-39/CSES-39.html

Spring and Summer Lawn Management Considerations for Cool-Season Turfgrasses by Mike Goatley, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication at http:pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-532/

Summer Lawn Management: Watering the Lawn by Mike Goatley, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication at http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430-010/

Peterson, Chris, *The Complete Guide to a Better Lawn*. 2011

Peas, Peas, Peas

By Cleve Campbell | May 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 5

The quantity of English pea plantings and harvests at **Monticello** during Thomas Jefferson's day suggests that these garden peas, or shell peas, must have been our **third president's favorite** vegetable. Jefferson joined his neighbors in a race each year to see whose peas would be the "first peas to the table." The winner of the contest hosted a dinner party, serving these sweet, crisp legumes in celebration of springtime.

The following 19th century recipe comes from Mary Randolph, a relative of Thomas Jefferson:

To have them in perfection, they must be quite young, gathered early in the morning, kept in a cool place, and not shelled until they are to be dressed; put salt in the water, and when it boils, put in the peas; boil them quick twenty or thirty minutes, according to their age; just before they are taken up, add a little mint chopped very fine, drain all the water from the peas, put in a bit of butter, and serve them up quite hot.

Randolph, Mary, *The Virginia House-Wife*, 1824 (facsimile of first edition, Historical Notes and Commentaries by Karen Hess, University of South Carolina Press, 1984, pp. 127-8).

As Mary Randolph suggests, **mint and butter** both pair well with fresh peas. Her simple recipe is undoubtedly one of the best sides for **spring lamb**. However, unless you want mushy peas, **boiling for one or two minutes**, followed by an ice bath, should suffice.

The best time to experiment with fresh peas is May and early June, as peas do not grow well in the heat of summer. Pesto is one of the most versatile ways to use peas. It is delicious served atop crusty bread, tossed with linguine or cheese ravioli (optional addition: pancetta), and as an accompaniment to fish and poultry. Try it with poached salmon, seared scallops, or baked chicken. Let your imagination be your guide. The following recipe makes about two cups of pesto– and may be almost as **ambiguous** as Mary Randolph's recipe in terms of quantity and procedure! **Taste, adjust, and enjoy!**

Pea Pesto

Pulse the following ingredients together in a food processor.

1 cup fresh peas, blanched (or, if using frozen peas, thawed)

1 handful of mint and 1 handful of basil

1 clove minced garlic

Juice of 1 lemon

½ cup grated Pecorino or Parmesan cheese (vegan: use walnuts or pine nuts)

1/3 cup olive oil, added last in a slow, steady stream

Salt and pepper to taste

One pound of pea pods is roughly equivalent to one cup of shelled peas.