

Gardening Calendar for April

03-20-2017

Fertilize the lawn with slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 as soon as you have mowed real grass twice. Which is usually sometime before May 1. Mow Bermuda grass at 1.5 inch or less. St Augustine does best at about 3.5 inches. The zoysia grasses respond well to be mowed at 2 inches. If you have buffalo grass mow it very high (5.5 inches) to reduce weed pressure.

The winter weeds are trying hard to go to seed in April. Keep them mowed or pulled. Beggar's lice will be a special problem because it produces seeds that get tangled in pet fur. The plant looks like carrot foliage. Bedstraw, another aggressive winter weed is easy to collect by raking it into sticky bundles to put in the compost pile.

It is time to plant tomatoes. Prepare the soil in a raised bed garden by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 4 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer over every 50 sq. ft. of bed. Irrigate with drip irrigation, a soaker hose or a hose with a watering wand. Live oak leaves make an excellent mulch for the vegetable garden.

Plant determinate varieties that grow quickly to their final height and then concentrate on setting fruit before it gets too hot. Indeterminate tomato varieties such as many of the heirlooms keep growing foliage deep into the summer and then are unable to set much fruit.

Among the varieties that perform best in our conditions are Red Deuce, Tycoon, Valley Cat, 444, Celebrity, BHN 968, Phoenix, and the new Rodeo tomato—HM 1824. Cherokee Purple is the Heirloom that seems to perform the best. If your garden has nematodes use Valley Cat, it has nematode resistance.

Early in the month green beans, watermelon, cucumbers and summer squash can be planted. I use a tatuma squash to replace the usually summer squash varieties because it has more resistance to squash vine borers. Eggplant and pepper transplants can also be placed in the garden. Plant okra seed later in the month.

Keep the onions and broccoli well fertilized and the English peas harvested.

In the flower garden the snapdragons, larkspur, and pansies will keep blooming for another full month but zinnias and other warm weather annuals can also be planted. Consider "Whopper" or semperfloren begonias in the shade along with coleus, pentas, and caladiums.

To accommodate the butterflies, in addition to zinnias plant mistflower, porter weed, cannas, salvias, flame acanthus, lantana, coneflower, sunflowers, and milkweed. The tropical milkweed is the most attractive but also find space for native species such as butterfly weed (*A.tuberosa*), and green, antelope horn, and common milkweed. Milkweed is the only species of plants on which Monarch butterflies will lay eggs.

Hummingbirds are back in San Antonio. In addition to the nectar plants such as cross vine, columbine, *Salvia greggii*, zinnias, and pentas. Hang one or more sugar water feeder from your eaves to observe them close at hand.