



## *Horticulture Notes: Make Those Newbies Shine!*

*Sandra Lawson*

Most plants from the Friendly Garden Club's plant sale are mature specimens dug from club members' gardens within the past month. Being freshly dug, which always causes some root damage, they have very special needs in order to flourish.

Root damage:

As the spade slices into the ground around the circumference of the plant, some root damage occurs. When you arrive home from the sale and un-pot each plant, check the roots. Remove any damaged root material to avoid disease. Place the plant in a small bucket and add water up to its soil line while you prepare the hole.

Hole prep:

Select the site depending on the plant's cultural requirements like sun, shade, pH, wind, water needs. Some of these are identified on the plant's marker. Dig a hole 10-12" deep and twice as wide as the root ball. Loosen the sides of the hole to ease root growth and to allow ready penetration of oxygen and water.

To the soil removed, add 3-4" of organic matter [compost, leaf mold, peat moss] and mix thoroughly. Add 2-4" of this mixture to the hole base. Fill with water from the bucket and allow it to drain. With amended soil, make a small mound at the base of the hole and spread the plant's roots gently over it. Insert the plant so its soil surface is flush with the garden soil surface. Around the plant, fill with the soil/compost mixture and tamp lightly. Don't crush the plant into the soil or you will destroy the air vents and compact the roots. Any amended soil remaining should be used to make a moat around the drip line of the plant to hold water for the roots.

Any water remaining in the bucket should be added to the moat now. Don't waste this water as it contains beneficial [mycorrhizal] fungi that aid the stressed roots by increasing their ability to absorb water and minerals and for carbohydrate storage. As the water drains, look for air holes or depressions at the soil line. Should any appear, add more soil/compost mix to raise the plant soil line to meet the garden's surface.

Mulch this plant with 3" of organic mulch; it should not touch the stem as this would facilitate disease and pests.

Next year, side dress with a couple inches of compost.

Water:

Damaged roots have difficulty providing adequate water to a growing plant. So water 1" every week. Water deeply rather than small amounts frequently.

During hot spells, this plant may wilt. It is demonstrating to you that it is still healing as it cannot get adequate water on its own yet. So water to a depth of 1" now. You may need to provide a sun screen for some shade during the hottest part of the day. Within a week or so the roots should recover enough to compensate for the demands of weather on a new transplant. Remove the sun screen at this point.

Continue to water weekly unless there is a good rain. But NEVER wet the leaves and try to water when the leaves are already wet as they are from morning dew. The more hours that leaves are wet, the higher the probability that fungal infections will occur.

Pests and Diseases:

When the cultural needs of a plant are met, the plant is less likely to become infected or riddled with pests. Should a problem arise, learn more about that plant's needs and how to provide for it.

Practice effective garden sanitation by weeding weekly, by removing and destroying diseased plant parts or the entire plant if necessary. Place these components in a black plastic bag, seal, and place in the hot sun for a week.

Then place the unopened bag in the trash. Effective clean-up also means removing fruit drops [tomatoes, tree fruits, etc.] just as you would in your kitchen.

If a pest problem should present, identify the pest in order to identify the least toxic remedy. Don't pull out the Round Up at first glance! Remember, identification of the problem is the most important step. EX: Insecticides won't kill mites because mites are in the spider family, not insects. Once you know what you are dealing with, you can select the most effective remedy. Check out Integrated Pest Management [IPM] for all your options and start with the least toxic strategy first.



## *In The News*

Club member Sandra Lawson was interviewed by Kelly Knox of the Gloucester times for her article about the benefits of gardening! You can check out the full article by clicking [here](#).