



HORTICULTURE: TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Sandra Lawson

It's amazing to me how resilient our gardens have been this spring, despite their shiverings. They emerged a little behind schedule but not enough to compromise our digging for Plant Sale specimens.

Of course, once dug, we had apoplexy about their survival. Prolonged cold, raw days and nights broken just briefly by a blast of hot, humid conditions. Such a mixed message for Mother Nature to bestow on these youngsters. Just proves what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

Don't get too excited because more rain is in the forecast. Days of it!

At some point, and watch those nighttime temperatures rise as an indicator, the temperatures will suddenly bypass spring and feel like summer. Any plants that you transplanted this spring might require additional water if they are in full sun. Perhaps daily if the heat really soars and holds that pattern. They could require shade coverings during the hottest parts of the day, too.

It's too soon to predict what this year's weather will do. So we have to observe diligently. Remember that normally, plants need an inch of water per week. Prolonged heat, lack of rain, new transplants can throw that formula off. If you have added lots of compost to your soil, that helps retain some extra water like interest on a savings account. Small amounts over time! Sandy soils have so much airspace that water runs through them. Treat this by adding compost. Please get a soil test [google search: soil test] that tells you about the macro- and micro- nutrients and fertility of your soil in addition to the pH. If pH is deranged for a specific species, all the banquets on a table will be of little sustenance!

If any part of your garden is near the street or sidewalk, put down some gypsum. This is a source of lime that binds with sodium [from salted roadways and sidewalks]. Free sodium will dehydrate plant roots, killing your lawn or garden edges. My soil test revealed high sodium levels all the way up to the house foundation. It must have accumulated over the years as previous owners used rock salt to treat the winding brick walkway to the front door.

This spring we can be grateful for the wet cold in that it maintains bloom longer. I've seen a lot of bees, birds, and butterflies for pollination but not yet a plethora of insects. Perhaps because I'm not out there playing in the dirt much. Nestlings, though, need insects as that's all they eat so I hope those moms and dads are resourceful. Perhaps they are serving the kids an expanded carnivorous diet.

Also, cold hearty vegetables like lettuces, spinach, peas are thrilled with this weather. Plant early and plant often.

Watch for mold. Most seeds won't germinate until the soil is 70 degrees. If you throw them out there, they could mold and rot before a sign of life is recognized!

Well, there is no way to predict what weather we will get when. So walk through your garden daily. Admire what you have created. Scrutinize unsavory situations and respond to them with energy and exertion. Don't let the molds or other infections and infestations take advantage of your seasonal fatigue from waiting. Be assertive. Be creative. Take on the challenge.

That's it from me after 4 years of being Horticulture Chair. Let us welcome Bea Heinze into the seat. You go girl! —Sandra