

June 2009

Herbaceous Ornamental Plant Tips

Culture

- Annuals and Perennials - Attract beneficial insects to your landscape by planting a wide variety of flowering annuals and perennials that will bloom over the entire growing season. Good choices are plants in the following families: daisy (marigolds, daises, asters, mums), carrot (dill, fennel, anise, yarrow, parsley) and mint (all mints and thymes).
- Pinch out the flower buds of asters, mums, goldenrod and other fall bloomers to keep plants bushy and prevent early flowering.
- Many garden weeds, like dock and sheep sorrel, have seed heads that are beginning to ripen. Pulling weeds out of your garden beds at this time will help minimize weed problems. Tear-thumb, also known as mile-a-minute vine (insert photo link), germinates in early spring and can be seen growing now. The triangular shaped leaves have stems with curved spines. This invasive weed can quickly take over a garden bed. Control by hand-pulling or with an application of a glyphosate herbicide. Weaken and kill invasive plants, like Japanese honeysuckle, by cutting them to the ground now and throughout the growing season. See HG88 Invasive Plant Control
- Cut Iris flower stalks down to the crown when they are finished blooming. Leave the foliage alone.
- Let spring bulb foliage die back naturally. Don't fold over or braid foliage. At this time the bulb absorbs nutrients it requires for growth the following year.
- Flower beds should be mulched after plants are growing vigorously. Shredded pine bark mulch or chopped leaves make good mulches. The depth should be no more than 1-3". Avoid placing mulch against the plant stems.
- Groundcovers - Consider planting a groundcover this spring in areas of your yard where the turf is consistently weak. Groundcovers are especially useful on slopes, in shaded areas under trees, and as a border around buildings and garden beds. Before planting a groundcover, work in organic matter and add lime and fertilizer according to soil test recommendations. Groundcovers for sunny areas include creeping thyme, creeping phlox, creeping dianthus, oregano, plumbago, and lambs ear. Some good shady area groundcovers include vinca, astilbe, epimedium, coral bells, wild ginger, hosta, and sweet woodruff. Check with local nurseries for other plant ideas and specific cultivars. Groundcovers are also useful as a border around buildings and garden beds. However, do not plant these rapid growers near property lines or woodlands where they may become invasive.
- Vines - Some annual vines to consider include scarlet runner and hyacinth beans, cardinal flower, moonflower, mandevilla, thunbergia (black-eyed Susan vine), nasturtiums and morning glories. Hops make an interesting, fast-growing perennial vine and produce fragrant cones used in beer making. They can be planted now and allowed to climb on a fence or trellis.

Insects

- Aphid numbers are high now on a wide variety of plants. Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that come in many different colors and suck the plant sap from a wide variety of plant leaves. They may cause leaves to pucker, twist and curl downwards. It is usually not necessary to spray insecticides or release beneficials to control aphids. Populations of ladybird beetles, green lacewings and wasp parasites build up quickly to keep aphids in check. You'll see these predators and parasites at work if you observe the aphid colonies closely.
- Planting a wide variety of flowering plants that bloom throughout spring and summer will help attract and keep beneficial insects in your landscape. If necessary, an application of insecticidal soap or ultra fine horticultural oil will kill these soft-bodied pests.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

Aphids excrete a sticky product called honeydew, when they feed. This leads to the growth of a black fungus on leaves, known as sooty mold. See HG83 Aphids on Ornamentals and HG94

- The damage from four-lined plant bug feeding can be seen on a wide variety of plants. Insects are yellow with four black stripes down the back and produce small, circular dark spots, usually on new growth. No controls are necessary. Feeding will stop by the end of the month. Unless severely injured early in the season, plants will outgrow moderate feeding damage.
- Iris borer larvae tunnel down and feed on the rhizomes. The leaves and flower stalks may wilt. The best control is prevention. Do not mulch your irises, plant rhizomes high in the planting bed and select full sun sites. If you suspect borers, dig up the rhizomes after bloom, cut off rotted and infested portions and re-plant.
- Thrips feed on flower buds and opened flowers causing them to turn brown. They cause leaf undersides to appear dirty and silvery. Monitor for them by tapping affected foliage or buds over a piece of white paper and look for small quick moving specks. They are slender, minute and appear yellow-brown in color and transparent. Thrips are especially bad on gladiolus and will prevent flowers from opening.
- Slugs are found on all types of flowering plants. They chew small holes in leaves and can also shred leaf tissue with their rasping mouthparts. Slime trails are a definitive sign of slug activity. They breed in protected, damp areas under boards, in ground covers and under thick mulches. They can be trapped with shallow pans of water and bread yeast or beer. You can also set out boards or half grapefruit rinds to attract and kill them. Diatomaceous earth, sharp sand or ground crab and oyster shell can be applied around plants as physical barriers. A new product containing iron phosphate is available that is supposed to slowly poison slugs upon ingestion. Chemical baits are also available. Be sure to carefully read the label.

Diseases

- If you notice diseases on your woody ornamentals, go to our new feature called Monthly Diseases.
- A number of leaf spot diseases on a variety of plants are common in June. Affected leaves can be removed and disposed. Funginex, a commonly used rose fungicide, will control black spot and powdery mildew.
- Thin out thick patches of periwinkle and pachysandra. You may notice wilt or dieback of vinca or periwinkle, which is caused by a fungus called phomopsis blight that girdles the stem. Clean out your vinca beds to improve air circulation and prune out infected plants. No chemical controls are available.
- Brown, bulls-eye lesions on pachysandra are an indication of the fungal disease volutella. Thin out plants to improve circulation and this disease usually subsides.
- This month you may notice ivy leaf blight on your ivy vines caused either by fungi or bacteria. This will weaken your planting and is most severe in thick, overgrown beds where dead leaves have accumulated. Rake out and thin out infected ivy beds. A fixed, basic copper spray can also be applied. Trim back English ivy that is invading walkways, turf and garden beds.

WATER GARDENING

- As the weather warms up, both planktonic (green water) and filamentous algae growth will continue to increase. Algae growth is rapid in the spring when the pond is fully exposed to the sun. Later this month after the water lilies' foliage has covered the surface by 60% the algae problem will subside. The addition of the tropical plants, water lettuce and water hyacinth will help keep your pond water clean and reduce both planktonic and filamentous algae. Mats of filamentous algae can be pulled out by hand. Starting up your filtration system will also help control algae growth, the biological component of the filter can also help reduce algae growth by absorbing the excess nutrients that feed algae.
- Now is still a good time to divide and repot hardy water lilies and other crowded aquatic plants. Fertilize your aquatic plants with products recommended for aquatic plants. Plant and fertilize tropical lilies in your pond now. It's important to set plants at the correct depth. Most varieties require 5-6 hours of sunlight per day.

Have a pest or gardening question?

Call the Home and Garden Information Center

800-342-2507

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