

May Gardening Calendar

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The permanent lawn grass of St Augustine, Bermuda, or zoysia grass should be at a growth stage that it is efficient to fertilize it early in the month. It works best to use a slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 where half of the nitrogen is released immediately, and the rest is released to be used by the grass during the growing season.

We wait until the lawn grass has grown enough that it has been mowed twice because it indicates that the root system has recovered enough to uptake the available nutrients and the foliage is developed enough so that translocation of the nutrients will result in them being distributed throughout the plant.

Organic lawn fertilizers are 100% slow release and low-level nitrogen sources. To be effective in supporting the normal lawn spring growth spurt, they would have to be applied earlier in the spring to give the products time to release the nitrogen. The nitrogen levels in organic lawn fertilizers are also about one-third as much as the material in manufactured products, so depending on the product, it may work best for the lawn if 3 times as much fertilizer is applied to the grass about March 1 rather than on May 1. If you prefer organic fertilizers, one option may be to fertilize this spring with a high nitrogen fertilizer like 19-5-9 and then use the slow release organic product beginning in early spring next year.

It is not recommended that “Weed and Feed “ products be used on our lawns. In our growing conditions the time to prevent or kill weeds is different from the time to provide nutrients to the lawn grass. Now, when it is time to fertilize, the winter weeds are at the end of their life already so applying a weed killer is wasted and environmentally inappropriate. If the product has preemergent properties, it is too late to prevent germination of the summer weeds when the fertilizer works best for the lawn.

The wildflowers performed well this spring but remember that they must be left to mature and drop their seed if they are going to bloom again next year. Resist the pressure to mow the plants down too quickly.

Your winter annuals have probably declined and need to be replaced. In the sun zinnias, cosmos, moss rose, and purslane work well. Use penta, semperfloren begonia, whopper begonia, caladium and coleus in the shade.

Zinnia are especially useful as a brightly colored garden plant that can be used as a cut flower. They are also a favorite nectar plant for hummingbirds and butterflies. The seeds are sought after by goldfinches, cardinals and other seed eaters. Zinnias can be planted by seed or transplants.

In addition to zinnia, plant milkweed, porter weed, mistflower, lantana, and salvia for the butterflies. Rely on tropical milkweed for a nectar source and Monarch egg laying site while you work on establishing native species such as antelope horn, green, and swamp milkweed.

In the vegetable garden keep the tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants well fertilized and watered. If you haven't planted okra yet it will still make a crop if you seed it early in May.