



Gardening with Acer

April - May - June 2026

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Most gardeners like to think of Mother Nature as being, basically, benevolent and kindly, wanting only to help gardeners bring beauty to the world and improve the landscape where they live. When she has a temper tantrum, we make excuses. This winter she certainly had several tantrums rolled into one and threw everything she could put her hands on at us and we'll all be talking about it for some time to come! But gardeners, and gardens, are tougher than they look and, living in New England as we do, we expect to be annoyed by the weather. And when the good weather comes, we immerse ourselves in all its promise and pleasure. We've moved the clocks forward, the light has changed, birds are chirping earlier and earlier, the first crocus should be along any day now and trees and bushes are showing signs of budding. Every gardener's heart lifts at the thought of what is to come. Some plants/bushes are slow to break dormancy normally and will probably take their time this year. Many perennials will have slept snug under their snow blankets but don't be surprised if they take a little longer than usual to leaf out but then catch up quickly. It's a whole new season ready to capture our attention and we're ready to enjoy every minute of it!

It's not unusual for gardeners to get to Spring and then decide that they either didn't plant enough bulbs in the fall or that they put some in the wrong places or that they just plain forgot about that one place that they can see when they're having breakfast and now it looks so bare! What to do?

Acer Gardens has a quick fix for you! We will have **pre-planted pots available** featuring daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, grape hyacinths and other spring charmers ready for you to position in the garden or on the deck/patio. Supplies are limited so don't wait too long to come over and choose! Let's welcome Spring together!

Reminder

Our goal is always to make the Newsletter easier for you to work with and to enjoy! To do that, we will now use the Newsletter for gardening help and general information and use email and the web site to give you quick updates on sales, workshops and other on-going events (including our popular videos) ... please get in the habit of checking both on a regular basis. We expect to add new material to the web site regularly... our Information Handouts currently include many sheets on Plants, Seasonal, How To's and Garden Challenges. By all means let us know, by email, what you'd like to see covered. We get some terrific ideas from our customers!

The Plant of the Month will be available at the nursery from the first of each month on and will be announced and described on the web site. These plants are carefully chosen to showcase current bloom and are featured at the nursery from April through October. The web site will keep you current!

National Arbor Day: April 24, 2026

Always celebrated on the 4th Friday of April, National Arbor Day is America's oldest environmental celebration. What better way to mark an anniversary, celebrate a special occasion or pay honor to a family member than to plant a tree? We're here to help and can advise on the most suitable trees for your chosen location and the best way to care for them.

Spring Chores ... Ready, Set, Go!

Spring garden chores (see the complete Information Sheet on the Acer Gardens website) can seem daunting but don't be overwhelmed by the list. Each garden is different and not all chores are absolutely necessary.

Clean up and rake off the garden beds; get rid of dead foliage. Remove dead or dying branches on trees and shrubs which were injured by disease, storms or animals.

Cut down grasses and any perennials you left standing in the fall. Fertilize your garden beds and don't plant anything new until the soil is completely friable ... grab a handful of soil and squeeze it. If water runs out or the soil compacts into a clump, it's too soon to work it. Alas, it's never too early to weed and you probably need to start!

Spring Products

Available Spring products at the nursery will include pelletized lime, pre-emergent fertilizer, lawn and garden fertilizer, Milorganite, organic lawn and garden products, grass seed, straw and control products for deer, insects, rabbits, voles, weeds, bugs and disease. April is the ideal time to apply lime, if needed, to the lawn; fertilize and use pre-emergent weed control.

Here they Come ... Bulbs, Pansies and Ephemerals

Winters are long in New England and this last one was particularly difficult! All gardeners look forward to seeing the bright splash of bulbs in the Spring but sometimes we forget that there are other early Spring bloomers waiting to take their turn to bring color to the landscape. Many are cold-tolerant; mix them with later-blooming flowers to prevent bare spots in garden beds.

Traditional pansies bloom from spring through early summer, with some repeat bloom in the fall. They are ideal used as edgings, can be popped in rock walls and along paths and make perfect container plants. Try planting pansies with other cool-season and frost-resistant plants. Fertilize them only at planting time, using a slow-release granular fertilizer. They like full or partial sun but actually need cooler temperatures to thrive. Try not to put them in strong afternoon heat. Be sure they get enough water ... pansies are much thirstier than people realize, especially when planted in containers! As the plants start to get leggy, cut them back a few inches. Make sure these containers get no more than 6 hours of sun a day. Putting them in the shade for the hottest part of the summer may actually help them bloom again!

As the pansies finish their first flush, native ephemerals move forward for a few short weeks. Blooming on the edge of the woods under deciduous trees they live their short life cycles and then vanish until next year. Most are very delicate in shape and soft in color; they add their own charm to the spring landscape. Think about using crocus, crested iris, trout lily, Jack-in-the-pulpit, trillium, grape or wood hyacinths, winter aconite or fritillaria. Extend the bloom time by adding pulmonaria, creeping phlox, iberis (candytuft), brunnera (bugloss), Dutchman's breeches and mertensia (Virginia bluebells) to the mix.

Aftercare for Bulbs

Don't forget to deadhead daffodils and tulips as they stop blooming. Cut the flowers off but let the stems and leaves turn brown before you cut them down. Bulb experts advise against braiding the leaves. You want all that nutrition from the leaves to go back into the bulbs. Many daffodils will happily naturalize and spread over years but, in this climate, most tulips have a limited life span of 3-4 years. Adding spreading plants to your bulb areas is a good thing to do as the growing foliage will cover up the fading bulbs and give your garden a second wind. If you plant your tulips among perennials slow to break in the Spring, their growing foliage will help to disguise the dying tulip foliage.

Updating Mature Flower Beds

All gardens should be edited periodically to keep them looking fresh ... sometimes it's just a question of reducing over-crowded beds or moving plants to a new location, one that will better meet their needs and reduce the required maintenance on your part. Time and changing physical strength lead many gardeners to consider downsizing their gardens and making them easier to care for and move around in. Sometimes your tastes have changed and you want to add more native plants, add, or takeaway, certain colors or create a garden that appeals more to changing family usage. Lowering upkeep and maintenance is often as simple as creating cleaner lines and using shrubs to produce a full background look. Slopes can be covered with ground covers or spreading small evergreens, reducing the need for mowing.

Aim for season-long interest, relying on foliage. Shades of green are restful to the eye and, repeated throughout the garden, produce "flow". Carefully-chosen shrubs can give bloom from March to October. Using small trees will give accents and help create focal points. Make sure your soil is in top-notch condition. Use long-blooming perennials to give interest and spice to the front of the shrub borders but try to avoid plants that are not disease or insect resistant or which require a lot of care and/or attention. Plant fewer varieties of flowers but plant in masses and sweeps; add easy-care plants to fill in empty spaces. Group plants with similar moisture needs together. Instead of mulch, add a spreading, low ground-cover to fill in an area. Foliage plants can tie everything together and serve to unify the "look" of the garden while reducing up-keep. Consider if using raised beds would be helpful. Upgrade your tools to the new ergonomic products which take some of the bending out of garden work. Lastly, simplify watering by using drip or soaker hoses ... in a drought situation, no water will be wasted. Updating a garden/landscape is an on-going proposition as plants mature and grow and the surrounding landscape changes. Gardeners and gardens learn to change and adapt together!

Dividing Perennials

Most perennials need periodic division in order to maintain plant vigor and strong flowering. Some plants should be divided every few years; some can go many years without division. When a perennial clump looks crowded in its space and produces fewer and smaller flowers, it is time to divide. It's a good idea to keep a record of when you divide so that you can gauge a plant's progress. Sadly, some plants naturally have a limited shelf-life and even dividing them will not keep them going past their natural life-span.

In general, most perennials should be divided in the spring. Here in Connecticut we can usually divide and re-plant until mid-May, allowing the new plants to bloom and become established before winter sets in.

Some perennials produce pop-up seedlings that are perfect for transplanting although bloom color may be slightly different from the parent. Grasses are best divided in early spring, after they have been cut back, because they do their aggressive growing in the hot days of summer. Peonies and iris should only be divided in the fall. Many plants (black-eyed Susan and leucanthemum e.g.) benefit from frequent division and almost seem to need it to thrive. Simply dig up the plant and...with your fingers...gently separate the plant into multiple sections. Plant at once, setting the new plant at the same soil level as before. Tamp the soil down around the plant so that water can pool; protect the new plant from strong sun until it is established.

Some plants should be divided into large segments as early as possible. These include lamium, brunnera, dendranthemum, asters, sedum, hosta, monarda, helenium and coneflowers. Pulling pieces from the outer edges of the clump makes for easy dividing. Place the divisions so that their "best side" is displayed well.

Division of hostas, daylilies and grasses calls for real strength and is best done after a good, soaking rain. The best tool for this is a sturdy garden shovel. Cut the dug-up plant in half or thirds with a sharp knife or a shovel and re-plant at once.

Groundcover Care

Groundcovers are often used to cover problem areas and to unify divergent components in the landscape. Multi-talented, they can serve as traffic barriers and visual guides as well as add color and texture, define spaces, soften hardscaping, partner with taller plants and minimize garden maintenance very quickly! Whole hillsides have been covered in plants acting as ground cover ... everything from heathers, junipers and roses ... but to most gardeners a groundcover serves to deal with a difficult area in an existing garden. Consider the height of the plant you choose in relation to the space you are covering and decide if you want an evergreen look or are content to see your groundcover die back in the winter. A good ground cover should spread by itself and develop into a dense cover, inhibiting weeds. Low growing groundcovers will fill the spaces between pavers or flagstones, replace small patches of hard-to-mow lawn and eliminate the need for mulch. Almost none of them want to be fussed over (some can even take limited foot traffic) and therefore make few demands on a gardener's time.

Using groundcovers can eliminate lawn completely in small, confined spaces. Planted around shrubs, groundcovers serve to retain moisture, control weeds and define the shape of a garden bed. When planting under trees use shallow-rooted plants. Adding organic matter to the soil before planting will give your ground cover a good base. Spring or early summer planting allows the groundcover plants to establish themselves and settle in. Pachysandra, myrtle, ivy, ajuga and vinca all give a very traditional look but there are many other dependable groundcovers, including:

Partial Shade Ground Covers

Asarum (Wild Ginger)	Spreads via rhizomes
Epimedium (Barrenwort)	Needs good drainage
Galium (Sweet woodruff)	Spreads rapidly
Gaultheria procumbens (Wintergreen)	Red fruits in the autumn
Iris cristata (Dwarf crested iris)	Naturalizes
Liriodendron (Lilyturf)	Deer-resistant

Sun-loving Ground Covers

Carex (Sedge)	Can tolerate dry shade
Juniperus (Creeping Juniper)	Holds slopes; evergreen
Lamium (Archangel)	Rapid spreader
Sagina subulata	Resembles moss.
Sedum (Stonecrop)	Takes drought and winds

Bill Harris Answers Your Winter Bush Damage Concerns

This was a winter to remember ... from the first December snowstorm through the January deep freeze and the February blizzard ... Mother Nature threw everything at us. Although most plants will have slept warm and snug under their snow covering, some bushes are showing signs of trouble but Bill Harris was quick to point out that you probably won't see unusual significant damage:

“That usually occurs after large temperature swings over a short period of time with bad weather thrown into the mix! The severity of the damage will determine if you need to replace a bush. Picking the right plant for the right spot is key to future success.

Broken and/or split limbs are almost unavoidable after a hard winter. Broken limbs should be cleaned up and/or cut off; split limbs can be repaired or, if severe, trimmed off.

As spring arrives, follow the general rules: prune while a plant is dormant or prune right after flowering. Only fertilize if necessary (if a bush is showing a nutrient deficiency). You don't want to force abnormal growth. Watch your shrub as the season advances."

Planting Gardens with Bird Appeal

If you want native birds flying around your garden, plant native flowers, bushes and trees! Birds would rather stick with their tried-and-true favorites: plants that feature seeds and berries and attract insects. Native plants offer all these benefits as well as a wide choice of building material for birds ... twigs, dead leaves and bark strips as well as fallen needles from evergreens.

Planting daisies (and their relatives) is an easy way to start a bird garden as their seeds are irresistible to many of our local birds. This plant family includes sunflowers, asters, black-eyed Susans and coneflowers. Adding bushes with berries to the general mix in your garden will attract a wide range of birds but they will strip ripe berries fast and you may have trouble if you want to cut some branches for flower arrangements! Mature viburnums fruit heavily and will keep the birds busy for weeks in late summer. Cardinals will devour the large red berries found on a Kousa dogwood tree and set new records doing so! Any blueberry bush must be covered with netting or the birds will do all your harvesting for you!

Adding some trees (even young saplings) will provide sheltering branches to the bird population: oaks and maples offer insects for the birds as well as welcome shade. Cypress bushes provide warm shelter and overwintering birds will be grateful for the protection and hiding places found in its deep branches. Feeding birds in the summer is a personal choice. Having water available for them (even if it's only a little puddle on a flat rock) will be very welcome ... to them and to visiting butterflies.

Focal Points

A focal point is simply something in the garden that draws your eye or leads you to an area you wish to emphasize. Some focal points are features in themselves such as a planter on a pedestal or a set of steps. Others pull you further into the garden or highlight something unusual: benches, statues, water or boulders. Less is always more ... don't create a confused space by using too many focal points. One per garden area is enough. Focal points are a reflection of your own unique gardening personality and are meant to express your particular interests.

Consider these simple qualities that make an object a true focal point:

Color. Choose a focal point that offers a strong color contrast to its surroundings whether it is a painted object or a dramatic foliage plant or evergreen.

Height. Objects that are higher than the surroundings attract the eye instantly. Be careful not to make the object so high that your eye leaves the garden instead of focusing on what is beneath the focal point.

Bulk. Some garden objects ... benches, a grouping of chairs, a large urn, a collection of similar containers, an unusual rock ... stand out because they are more dominant than the surrounding garden foliage and therefore showcase the plants around them.

Geometric Shape. Manmade objects ... raised planters, paired pedestals, benches, birdbaths etc. ... stand out from the shapes of the plants and are noticed because they are different from the surrounding plants.

Many focal points will feature more than one of the above qualities. Only you can decide what works to your garden's best advantage.

Take a Good Look at Your Foundation Plantings

Foundation plantings serve a purpose: they soften the hard lines of a house where it meets the ground, anchor the corners of the house and create a welcome to the front door. If your house sits on an expanse of lawn without mature trees around it, shrubs and evergreens will give the feel of maturity to your personal landscape. But everything grows and before you know it, your foundation plantings may need some attention/replacement. Echoing existing shrubs in foundation plants creates a sense of unity in your personal landscape. You may not have to replace everything but it's a good idea to keep these concepts front and center as you think about new selections:

Think in terms of mature height. Dwarf or smaller shrubs may work better in your space now so that windows don't get obscured. Try not to add shrubs that get leggy.

Location is everything! Know your exposure. Sun? Shade? A mix? Choose wisely.

Designers tend to stress entryway plantings, using evergreens for year-round visual interest. Front-door plantings should not obscure the door, impact arrivals and departures or attract undesirable bugs and insects. Many gardeners are using curved foundation beds to mark entryways and walkways and layering their plantings accordingly. . Mulch foundation plantings and edge to add to the visual impact.

Corner plantings will frame your house visually and should be taller than the rest of the plantings. Don't plant too close to the house ... allow for future growth. Think about choosing shrubs that don't need a lot of pruning and care.

Texture in the Shade Garden

Although there are certainly many perennials which give some bloom in the shade, many gardeners depend on the contrasts between bold and delicate foliage textures to give a shade garden interest and depth. Large masses of plants are very effective in shade gardens, helping to create curving shapes and draping over paths. Site a few well-chosen evergreens in the back-ground to add even more texture and contrast. There are some proven ways to help you design a shade garden:

Vary the color of green when using leaves similar in shape

Bring a sense of drama to a shade bed with bright, variegated or green-striped leaves

Shift focus from plant to plant and add interest with feathery leaves

Depend on the occasional vertical element to add excitement and punch up the mounding shapes which are characteristic of many shade plants

Some plants even have green flowers (hydrangeas, lady's mantle and nicotiana) and can be tucked in to add another layer of "green".

A sheltered shade area, with a seating area protected by trees and plants, provides a sense of enclosure and stability to gardener and visitors alike. Gardeners earn their rest periods so create an oasis and make time to sit in the shade and enjoy the pleasure gardening brings.

Setting up a Cutting Garden

Gardeners work very hard on their flower beds and the “look” of their landscapes but are sometimes reluctant to cut flowers for the house. A separate Cutting Garden can be the simple answer to the problem especially if you plan ahead. Most plants, even annuals, have specific bloom times but a carefully chosen mix of annuals and perennials can give you bloom from spring to late summer. Think about the colors you want to use in your arrangements and plan for a mix of heights, texture and foliage. Choosing longer stemmed flowers will give you more arranging options. Mixing perennials and annuals will increase your options and give you a wider color range. Include a mix of different flower sizes and shapes. Save a little room for an impulse plant, one you fall in love with and have to have!

You will need full sun and fertile soil and should plant in rows for easy care and access. If using perennials in your mix, keep them planted together as they will remain in the ground from year to year. Cover the paths with landscape fabric or straw to cut down weed growth. Other than watering (and fertilizing annuals) your basic maintenance task will be deadheading to encourage your plants to keep blooming. You may find that staking many of your plants will help prevent rainstorm damage and actually help your cutting process. Fertilize every few weeks and water well.

You have many choices and should tailor them to suit your own style ... and house color scheme. Some traditional stand-byes include;

Annuals

African Daisies	Larkspur
Ageratum	Lisianthus
Ammi	Marigold
Calendula	Salvia
Celosia	Snapdragons
Cosmos	Verbena
Dahlias	Zinnia
Gomphrena	

Perennials

Aster (assorted)	Lavender
Astilbe	Leucanthemum (Shasta Daisy)
Chrysanthemum	Lobelia
Coreopsis	Lupine
Dianthus (Pinks)	Phlox (Summer Phlox)
Echinacea (Coneflower)	Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan)
Gypsophila (Baby's Breath)	Veronica (Speedwell)

Foliage

Coleus	Hosta leaves
Dusty Miller	Ornamental grasses
Ferns	

Cut your flowers in the early morning and plunge the stems into water. When ready to arrange your blooms, hold the stems under water and re-cut them at a slight angle before placing them in the vase. Remove any leaves which would be under water in the vase. To help your flowers last longer, add 1 Tb. sugar, ½ tsp. of white vinegar and ½ tsp. of bleach into 1 qt. of water and use to fill vases as needed. Your cut flowers will stay fresh longer if they are not placed in front of an open or sunny window. Change the water often.

Often-Asked Questions

Some of my bulbs need to be replanted elsewhere in the garden. When can I do that?

As soon as the flowers have faded but before the foliage is gone is an ideal time to transplant bulbs. Deadhead the bulbs, then dig out the entire clump. Either transplant the plant as it is or divide it into several smaller clumps and replant the clumps. Water the newly transplanted clumps and let them continue the process of preparing for next spring

I love to tuck in annuals here and there but I'm never sure when it's safe to plant them. What's the rule?

Gardeners are always anxious to get plants into the ground but annuals need a slightly longer runway than most perennials. Annuals have different designations and will thrive if you follow these simple rules:

Hardy annuals are frost hardy and can be set out when a light frost is still likely.

Half-hardy annuals will survive a very light frost and can be set out in moderate spring weather.

Tender annuals cannot come through any frost and prefer warm nights. Do not set them out until nights are regularly 50F. If in doubt, ask someone at the nursery ... better safe than sorry!

Do I need to fertilize my annuals?

Since annuals have only a few months to bloom, it's a good idea to top-dress them with manure or give them some fertilizer, especially in the first half of the growing season. If you're mixing them with perennials and other woody plants be sure they all have similar light, water and soil needs.

If I were a hummingbird, what would I want gardeners to grow for me?

Only 2 of the many species of hummingbirds actually get this far North to visit us so give them a warm welcome with agastache, columbine, coral bells, cuphea, fuschia, lobelia, monarda, petunia and salvia. The little birds feed 8 times a day on the sweet nectar of plants and prefer bright flowers with a tubular shape. Honeysuckle vines are great favorites. Check out Acer Gardens Information Sheet (web site) on hummingbirds to access a full list of hummingbird favorites.

I have a shady area near one of my best sitting spots that needs a quick fix. What flower will add some bright color?

The wide range of types and colors available makes begonias the answer! They start blooming in early summer and will continue until hard frosts. They are happy with filtered light under trees but need to be shaded from afternoon sun. Give them rich, well-drained soil and good air circulation, especially if you place them in containers. Some begonias have mounding shapes; some have trailing, bell-like flowers which are well displayed in hanging baskets.

Is there a preferred way to plant tomato seedlings?

Unlike most other plants, tomato seedlings actually like to have half of their stems covered with soil at planting time. The stems will not rot but will grow even more roots and develop a strong root system to take in water and nutrients. If you are going to stake your plants, do so at planting time to avoid any future root damage.

Garden Containers, Window Boxes and Hanging Baskets

It's time to think about containers again! Acer Gardens will have many pre-planted containers for you to choose from but, of course, you can bring your own empty container to the nursery and staff will be happy to help you design something just right for your garden. Maybe it's time to try a container featuring just one color but using varying shades of that color. Containers can be used to lead the eye along a path, to frame a view or to cover-up a temporary "hole". The possibilities are almost endless! If using only one color try using varying shades of that color. Change the look of your containers at will by changing the plantings. Troughs and containers have the advantage of portability and can be moved around the garden as the season advances or as "holes" develop. Acer's container selection continues to expand with many new choices available. Take a moment or two to look at some of the new lines we are featuring this year.

Accurate watering is key to growing good containers as is a good ratio of plant to pot. Think about where your containers will be placed as you choose your plants. Containers for decks and terraces will be on view 24/7 so they can be made to reflect how you choose to entertain or become extensions of the larger garden. A container sited for the "wow" factor can be filled to over-flowing with wild colors and luxurious blossom and you should feel free to depart from your normal style. After all, if it doesn't work, it's easy to change! Be sure that all your container plants share the same sun, soil and water requirements and set up a realistic fertilizing schedule. Many gardeners photograph their containers as the season advances and keep them as guides for next year.

By their very nature, window boxes are a more permanent part of your garden landscape than containers but they share the same requirements. If plants will thrive in a container, they will also thrive in a window box. The same design rules ... Thrill, Fill, Spill ... apply but you will have to space them out differently as you will be looking at your window box head on, creating a miniature landscape. Choosing plants that match your sun exposure is the key to success! Your window box, like your containers, will need frequent watering so good drainage is critical. That frequent watering will also call for slow-release fertilizers or the application of a diluted liquid fertilizer every few weeks. At the end of the season, many gardeners tuck in small bulbs for next Spring. Adding pansies the following Spring will give you a head start on the growing season!

What looks better than a beautiful hanging basket bursting with blooms and drawing every eye? It's not the friendliest environment for plants and they will take a bit of extra work and attention but it's worth it for the effect. Following a few simple rules will make your life easier:

Hanging baskets need a lot of watering ... sometimes once a day.

Use a potting mix with slow-release fertilizer mixed in. Add liquid fertilizer once a week.

Give the basket a haircut when it gets leggy, as it will.

If your basket hangs by chains, be sure they are strong enough. A wet basket is heavy!

Keep baskets away from traffic patterns in the garden ... collisions are no fun!

Whether you use one kind of plant or a combination, remember the over-all look.

Dependable choices include:

Shade

Begonia

Coleus

Impatiens

Torenia

Fuchsias

Sun

Lantana

Calibrachoa

Petunia

Scaevola

Verbena

Patio Vegetables & Herbs

Even if you don't have a "real" vegetable garden, you can certainly grow herbs and many vegetables. The nursery has a large selection of herbs and vegetables which will all do well planted together in containers! Dwarf vegetables are always a good choice as are vegetables that take up little space (lettuce, radishes and scallions) or crops that bear over a long time (tomatoes and peppers). "Bush" and "Compact" sizes will do well grown in containers or tucked into the front of flower beds. Try planting a Summer Salad container with a tomato, a cucumber, parsley and chives. Lettuce and containers are born companions. Plant seeds every 3-4 weeks for successive harvests. Some new cucumbers and squash plants are designed to be grown vertically and take up very little room.

Choosing vegetables with the same water and sun requirements will be a plus. Almost all vegetables do best when grown in full sunlight, at least 6 hours per day. Leaf vegetables (lettuce, greens, spinach and parsley) will tolerate a little shade, especially as the season lengthens.

Pick a container larger than you think you will need. Be sure the container has good drainage (holes in the bottom) because containers need more watering than vegetable beds as they dry out quickly from sun and wind. Some plants may require daily watering. Don't let the soil dry out between waterings as this could cause the plants to drop their flowers and fruits. Potting mixes (peat-based) are a good soil choice; use a slow release or organic fertilizer at planting time.

Vegetables

Acer Gardens is your "go to" place for vegetable seeds and starter plants. Knowledgeable staff will be happy to help you choose what you need to make your vegetable growing a pleasure and to answer questions.

Plotting your garden on graph paper will help you establish boundaries and maximize your available space. Remember to rotate your crop's positions from year to year to keep the soil fresh. If you are using rows be sure to leave access routes for weeding and fertilizing. More and more vegetable gardeners are going vertical in an effort to maximize available space ... tomatoes and cucumbers in particular benefit from this concept, as do peas and some squashes and melons. Acer Gardens continues to offer an outstanding selection of seed varieties of popular gourmet vegetables and heirloom annuals.

Many vegetables can be planted as soon as you can work the soil. Leaf lettuces, are harvested young and re-planting every 2 – 3 weeks will keep you harvesting into fall. Arugula, cilantro and spinach will also continue producing on a similar schedule but do not re-plant in the heat of the summer. Radishes, a fast and easy grower, can be planted in short rows at 2 – 3 week intervals. Spring is the optimum time to direct sow or plant peas, broccoli, cauliflower, beets cabbage, leeks carrots, parsley, onions, Swiss chard, kale and micro- greens.

Late May is a good time to plant cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, peppers, melons, pumpkins, and squash. Plant basil near the tomatoes to discourage the insects that feed on them. Alyssum, nasturtiums and marigolds planted in the vegetable garden will fend off many aphids, thrips and beetles and will protect your squash and pumpkin crops. Fennel bulbs and onions can be planted now ... both hold well in the vegetable garden.

The wide-ranging herb selection keeps expanding and now includes Stevia (the sugar substitute), lemon grass, a wide range of thymes and lemon verbena (the leaves are wonderful in water or iced tea). Many basil are now resistant to downy mildew. Most herbs will do well in patio and deck containers but Thai basil should be grown separately as it actually needs to dry out between waterings. Think about inter-planting herbs and vegetables in the garden.

Acer Gardens' Information sheet on Growing Vegetables is available on the web site and at the nursery.

Garden Help Lines

As the season kicks off, questions can arise and UConn's Cooperative Extension System is available to answer questions on many garden topics including plant insects and diseases. They can be reached at 1-877-486-6271 or (www.ladybug.uconn.edu/index.html)

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station will answer inquiries on lawn problems (860-683-4977), soil testing (203-974-8521) and plant disease issues (203-974-8601).

Acer Gardens
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