

## May in the Tallahassee Garden



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**O**ur gardening theme this month is water and fertilizer. May is often a dry month so it's important to keep track of rain fall amounts and water lawns and plants when needed. Most plants are now actively growing and will benefit from fertilization. All fertilizers should only be applied according to label directions.

**Shrubs and Trees:** Finish pruning and fertilizing spring-flowering shrubs this month. Prune oak-leaf hydrangeas and climbing roses after they finish blooming to create a supply of new wood for next year's flower formation. Whiteflies can be a problem on fruit trees or on the flush new growth on trees and shrubs. Control using insecticidal soap according to label directions.

**Annuals and Perennials:** Pansies, snapdragons, petunias and other winter annuals should now be past their prime. Remove and replace with heat-resistant summer flowering annuals such as begonias, impatiens, coleus, salvia, marigolds, torenia, verbena, ornamental peppers and gaillardia. Keep the old blooms picked off annuals and perennials to encourage more blooms. Fertilize annuals monthly or use a slow-release fertilizer following label directions.

**Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes and Tubers:** Plant caladiums and hardy or semi-hardy summer flowering bulbs such as ginger, crinum, gladiolus, iris, society garlic, red-hot-poker and daylilies. Fertilize daylilies lightly as the buds appear. After blooming, remove the seed pods. Evaluate your spring blooming bulbs as they finish blooming. Common causes for diminished blooms include too much shade, over-crowding (divide and transplant) or the bulbs are planted too deeply (lift and replant). To move bulbs with foliage that dies back after blooming, such as daffodils and lycoris, dig when the foliage dies. Store in a cool dry place until ready to plant in the fall. Fertilize actively growing bulbs after the foliage appears.

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Roses: Continue to spray hybrid tea roses regularly for black spot and mildew control. Shrub or old garden roses don't need regular preventive spraying. Spray only if problems appear. Keep rose beds weed-free. Weeds can harbor insect pests like aphids and thrips.

**Lawn Care:** Good cultural practices are required for a healthy lawn. Fertilize your lawn, if needed, using a fertilizer such as 15-0-15, 15-5-15, or similar analysis. Use at the rate of ½ pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. This would be 3 1/3 pounds of 15-0-15 fertilizer per 1,000 sq. ft. If the 15-0-15 fertilizer has at least 7.5% water-insoluble or slow-release nitrogen, then you can use 6 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. Be sure to water in well. Water established lawns infrequently, but deeply. Mow with a sharp blade. Centipede grass should be cut no lower than one and one-half to two inches. St. Augustine and bahiagrass generally should be cut to a height of three to four inches.

**Vegetables and Herbs:** Plant sweet potatoes, melons, pole beans, southern peas, butter beans, peanuts, mustard, green onions, and okra. Fertilize monthly, or if using slow release fertilizer, apply as directed. Corn must be kept well-watered while tasseling and silking. Cut herbs and harvest vegetables regularly to encourage continued production.

**Fruit:** Keep fruits (except citrus) well mulched, especially figs and blueberries. Fertilize one to two year old figs and grapes monthly through July. Citrus trees do not like wet feet. Plant only in well drained soil. Mulch is not recommended around citrus but if mulch is used keep it at least one foot away from the tree trunk. Fertilize citrus this month.

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