

TOOLS, TIPS, AND TRICKS – PART 1

Tools:

- **Tool sharpener**
- **Wet stone for sharpening tools**
- **Bean Tower – Gardener's Supply for beans, peas, and sweet peas**

Tips:

- **Time to cut back Heuchera to the soil level, your plants will grow back with wonderful new strength.**
- **Time to cut back all your ferns to crown of new shoots, you will regret waiting until the new fronds start unfurling as it will take much more work.**
- **When starting sweet peas, peas, and beans seeds, soak overnight first**
- **When starting sweet peas, trim plants at they reach about 6" and leave 2 sets of leaves, you will get two shoots and double the flowers.**
- **Do not use any sprouted seeds of squash or tomatoes that may come up on their own in your garden. The results are zombie plants that produce inedible fruit.**

Tricks

- **Coffee Grounds: add to garden or your compost bin to provide nitrogen.**
- **Eggshells: collect and dry then crush to consistency of coffee grounds. Grind up in blender, food processor, or crush with a rolling pin. Add to your garden, compost bin and tomatoes to help prevent blossom end rot. Sprinkle around vulnerable plants that the slugs and snails like.**
- **Pine needles: collect and use for mulch around your strawberry plants to hold berries up off the soil. Also good around plants that such as blueberries and rhodies.**
- **Shredded paper: my junk mail and paper scraps get shredded and used as the dry compost layer in my compost bins. Also great as a mulch around tomato plants to prevent water splashing up on plants and infecting them with fungus also as a reflective mulch.**

Tools, Tips, and Tricks Part II

4/2024

Tools:

- Countertop compost bin: Simple human Compost Caddy, available on Amazon to collect your vegetable and fruit waste for \$50.00.
- Safety Glasses.... every time you are in the garden....no excuses.
- Construction stakes from Home Depot, paint and use as plant stakes. Home Depot 1" x 2" x 48" are \$15.98 for bundle of 12 or about \$1.33 each. Paint completely with a latex paint to make them last several years. Mine are bright red and make an architectural accent to the garden.

Tips:

- Sources of gardening goodies
 - Gardener's Supply for tools and non-plant gardening needs you never knew you needed. A bit pricy but excellent quality with many goodies to make gardening easier as we age. www.gardeners.com
 - White Flower Farm: excellent source for spring bulbs at a very reasonable price. You can order in the summer for fall delivery. Check out their big bag of mixed bulbs to naturalize you get 100 bulbs of 20 different varieties that bloom from February to May. www.whiteflowerfarm.com
 - Swan Island Dahlias: all things dahlia tubers with a wide range of prices and helpfully organized by bloom size. www.dahlias.com
- Sweet pea seeds: allow your vines to go to seed late in the season then gather the vines and dry. Then pick off pods when crispy and shell into a container with a moisture absorbing gel pack.
- Marigolds at the end of the season pick off dead blossoms when they form seed heads, dry and remove seeds from head. Store in container with a gel pack.
- Lavender: Collect spent heads and allow them to dry. When dry, crumble off dry flowers for sachets store in jar with gel pack.
- Cane berries: June-bearing raspberries, cut off spent canes at ground level and leave new ones to produce berries next summer. Everbearing canes at the end of the fall fruiting, cut off tops of canes that produced in June to about 5-6 feet tall, this will encourage side shoots next year to produce a June berry crop on these canes. Once they have produced a second crop in June allow them to die and cut back these dead canes in the fall.
- Marion Berries and Logan Berries: after canes have produced in the fall or early spring, prune back all horizontal canes and leave vertical canes.
- Mycorrhizal fungi: is a powder additive, available in nurseries and on Amazon. Use it to sprinkle on root balls of new plantings such as shrubs and trees. It helps plants

establish more quickly and boost healthy growth by supplying additional water and nutrients, resist drought, produce bigger crops, flowers, resist disease and thrive in poor soils and adverse conditions.

- Repellex tablets to repel deer a systemic animal deterrent with capsaicin. Available from Amazon is a systemic repellent which does not prevent deer damage but seems to reduce it. If you can find tablet form, this is easier to use so you do not get the dust in your nose and eyes. I put it at the root level of roses early in spring so the plant uptakes it into the plant and flowers.
- When taking multiple cuttings of long stems (example roses) cut bottom of stem straight across and at an angle at the top so you know which end to point upwards in the soil.
- Dusty Miller the annual that lasts years. This annual can grow and winter over very well for two summers and one winter color for very low cost.
- A convenient and relatively inexpensive fertilizer for indoor and outdoor plants, especially pots and tomatoes, is liquid seaweed concentrate. EX on Amazon: 32 oz container Liquid Seaweed which will make 470 gallons of fertilizer is \$18.95 or about 60 cents per ounce.