

MAY

MAINTENANCE

- ⊙ Water trees and shrubs deeply with drip irrigation, soaker hoses, or a deep-root irrigator. To avoid overwatering, check soil moisture with a trowel or soil probe. Water small to medium shrubs when the top 3 to 6 inches of soil are dry, large shrubs and trees when the top 6 to 12 inches are dry. Drought tolerant plants can go longer between waterings.
- ⊙ Build water basins around shrubs, trees and roses to catch every drop.
- ⊙ Spread 1 to 2 inches of mulch over garden beds. Mulch materials can include fir bark, wood chips, shredded cedar, composted leaves, and cocoa hulls, to name a few. In general, mulches are any organic material spread over the surface of the soil that serves to retain moisture, discourage weeds and moderates soil temperatures. By spreading mulch now, you may be able to delay turning on water systems once summer starts. Be sure to keep mulches 3 to 6 inches away from the crowns of plants and trunks of trees to prevent crown rot.
- ⊙ Mow lawns on the highest setting to conserve moisture and shade weed seeds to prevent germination.
- ⊙ Lawns should be aerated and dethatched as soon as they lose their excessive sogginess from our rainy season. Aeration can be done manually or by machine, but must remove a core of earth. This core should then be removed from the lawn. Do not use spikes to aerate, as they simply push aside soil and roots. Dethatching can also be done manually or by machine. When completed, the lawn should be mowed and any residue removed. While it is generally recommended to leave grass clippings on the lawn, after dethatching, all clippings and thatch should be removed.
- ⊙ To encourage branching and bushier plants, pick spent blooms from roses and other flowering shrubs; pinch perennials and new annuals.
- ⊙ Late in the month, thin fruit on apple, Asian pear, nectarine, peach, and pear trees. On heavily bearing trees, thin the triples and doubles to single fruits; make sure you leave about 6 inches between fruits. On lightly bearing trees, thin the triples to doubles, and stop there.
- ⊙ Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines after bloom.
- ⊙ Citrus should be pruned to remove dead wood, crossing branches, long suckers and water sprouts.

- ⊙ Birds are an asset to your garden for all of the insects they consume; and they need a drink of water near food sources. Do you have a clean water source in your garden?
- ⊙

FERTILIZING

- ⊙ Fertilize annuals, fruit trees, fuchsias, perennials, and shrubs.
- ⊙ If fruit trees seem chlorotic (yellow leaves with green veins), foliar feed with Liquid Gold at two week intervals until symptoms disappear.
- ⊙ Feed roses after the first bloom cycle, and then repeat every four to six weeks.
- ⊙ Feed warm season turf.
- ⊙ Fertilize perennials in February, May and September with Master Nursery Rose and Flower Food, Formula 49 or Dr. Earth Rose & Flower Fertilizer. You can skip fertilizing in May if your garden consists of perennials which thrive on neglect. Many of the drought tolerant perennials, for example, prefer not to be pampered with high nitrogen, high phosphorus fertilizers.
- ⊙ Container plants should be fertilized with an appropriate granular fertilizer monthly. If you prefer liquid fertilizers, apply twice a month slightly more than half strength.
- ⊙ Give the first fertilizing of the season to waterlilies and other container-grown water plants.

PEST/ WEED CONTROL

- ⊙ Consider utilizing beneficial insects in lieu of insecticides this summer. Ladybugs and their larva feast on aphids and white flies and are especially useful in rose gardens and vegetable gardens. Release 50-100 at a time, in the evening. Set out shallow dishes of water along with plant parts covered with aphids. These props will encourage ladybugs to stick around. Praying mantis, overall carnivores, are sold in their egg cases. Set out egg cases in a shady location off the ground, such as in a tree or shrub. Eggs will hatch mid- to late summer. Beneficial nematodes are useful for lawns and shade gardens. Apply April/May and again in July. Soak in bucket of water for 30 minutes, and then gently remove vermiculite. Put solution in watering can and water lawn or beds, applying as evenly as possible. Rinse out bucket to get all organisms. As these beneficial insectss are living creatures, remember not to apply insecticides in their midst, as they will be killed.
- ⊙ Wash aphids off new growth, or spray with insecticidal soap.
- ⊙ Trap, handpick, or bait for snails, slugs, and earwigs.
- ⊙ Hoe weeds as they appear or they may smother new seedlings.
- ⊙ Apply Bayer Advanced Lawn Season-Long Grub Control or Beneficial Nematodes in May to control lawn grubs. (Note: If you are using herbicides to control weeds in your lawn, allow 2 weeks before and after nematode applications to encourage them to increase). Controlling lawn grubs now will prevent skunks and raccoons from tearing up your lawn in the late summer and fall. Beneficial nematodes are microscopic organisms which consume various destructive soil-dwelling insects, such as lawn grubs. They do not harm earthworms and are safe around pets and people, but they can be harmed by herbicides and insecticides.

- ⊙ Fireblight (pear blight) appears as blackened leaves at the twig tips which bend down like a shepherd's crook and usually affects pears, pyracantha and less frequently, apples. A preventive spray of Liqui-Cop (1 Tablespoon per gallon of water) is helpful. For apples, apply when buds are at the silvery tip stage; for pears, apply when in bloom. If the disease shows in the leaves, cut off the branch, 9 to 12 inches below the diseased portion.
- ⊙ If squirrels are digging in flower boxes, pots or the vegetable garden, sprinkle some Critter Ridder in the affected areas. We have heard good reports on Critter Ridder, and it is also good when used against raccoons.
- ⊙ If your gardenias show brown buds which drop off before opening, the cause is probably thrips. Use Acephate (Isotox) or Monterey Garden Insect Spray to remove.
- ⊙ Fuchsia gall mites create gnarled leaves with reddish blisters and are common on hybrid fuchsias. If symptoms appear, U.C. Agricultural Service recommends pruning out disfigured growth and spraying with Sevin once a month. You can also begin a preventative program using Sevin once a month starting in March. Consider species fuchsias, which are mite-resistant. While not as showy as the hybrids, they offer the same bloom time and a surprising diversity of foliar textures.
- ⊙ Camellia golden ring spot virus manifests as yellow rings or circular splotches on 2-year old or older leaves. It may also cause streaking in flowers. There is currently no cure for this virus, but it may be spread by pruning tools. Clean tools after pruning each plant with alcohol or a 10% bleach solution so as not to spread the virus to other Camellias.
- ⊙ Watch for powdery mildew on crape myrtles. If symptoms appear, spray twice with sulphur a week apart. If you're planning to plant a crape myrtle, consider planting hybrids with the Native American tribal names, such as *Tuscarora*, *Hopi* and *Natchez*. These varieties were hybridized specifically to resist powdery mildew.
- ⊙ Watch for thrips and Black Vine Weevil damage on rhododendrons. Thrips damage appears as a silvery mottling or bleaching of the upper surfaces of leaves. Undersides show small, glossy black dots. Weevils leave distinctive notches along leaf margins as they feed. Both can be controlled with Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (Isotox) or Monterey Garden Insect Spray. Black Vine Weevils can also be controlled with Beneficial Nematodes.
- ⊙ Powdery Mildew appears as whitish splotches on the surface of leaves and on buds and stems of roses. To control, use Safer Garden Fungicide or wettable sulphur once a week until the symptoms disappear. If these measures aren't satisfactory, use Ortho Rose Pride (Funginex).
- ⊙ Rust appears as small yellow to black spots on the upper surface of rose leaves, which, when flipped, show rust-colored pustules. Use Ortho Rose Pride (Funginex) to control.
- ⊙ Black spot appears in early spring as large, dark irregular spots on the upper surface of rose leaves. Control with Ortho Rose Pride (Funginex) or Ortho Garden Disease Control (Daconil).
- ⊙ Prevent weeds in rose beds by applying Concern Weed Prevention Plus. This product contains corn gluten, which prevents seeds from germinating and contains 9% nitrogen, providing slow-release fertilization. **Never use Round-Up within 100 feet of roses**; it's the surest way to deform new foliage and developing buds. You should hand-dig or use a tool such as a hula-hoe to remove weeds in the rose bed.
- ⊙ Rose slugs start life as a tiny green caterpillar look-alike on the bottom-side of leaves. As they eat and grow, the leaves are full of small holes which eventually merge. Control

rose slugs with Orthenex, Malathion, Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (Isotox) or Monterey Garden Spray.

- ⊙ If your lawn shows holes one to one and one half inches in diameter, you probably have been infested with voles. They can be controlled with Wilco brand Gopher Getter number 2. (Don't use WGG number 1.)
- ⊙ Spittlebugs generally make their homes on perennials and shrubs this time of year, looking literally like a wad of spit nestled in the leaves. Spray off with a hose or spray with Master Nursery Nature's Pest-Fighter. These are the larva of leafhoppers, a sucking insect; and they should be removed.
- ⊙ Scab of apple and pear appears as black or brown spots on the leaves and black or brown depressions on fruit. Scab is a fungus and generally begins to show in April and May. If scab is present on apples this season, spray apple trees the following dormant season at 2-week intervals beginning at the "green-tip" stage (when leaf buds begin to break) until flowers open. Use lime sulphur or Triforine (Funginex). If scab is present on pears this season, spray next dormant season with lime sulphur or Triforine (Funginex) at the "green tip" stage and again at early bloom.
- ⊙ To control powdery mildew on grapes, spray every two weeks with sulphur. Avoid overhead water and be judicious with fertilizer so that excess foliage isn't generated. Do not spray when temperatures exceed 85 degrees F or within one month of an oil spray.

PLANTING

- ⊙ Sow summer annuals such as asters, cosmos, impatiens, marigolds, phlox, sunflowers, petunias, portulacas and zinnias. Or, for a faster, easier start, buy cell packs.
- ⊙ Put in dahlias and begonias for a long season of bloom.
- ⊙ Reseed or transplant seedlings every three weeks for successive harvests of beans, corn and squash.
- ⊙ Plant pumpkins, melons and gourds. Put in extra and designate it for the Good Neighbor Gardens project, where gardeners donate their produce to help out food banks and community centers. For a free starter kit from the Mercury News, call (408) 920-5241.
- ⊙ Consider planting cantaloupe and pumpkins on mounds covered with black plastic. Increasing soil temperatures by trapping heat in this way, may ripen fruit in a more timely fashion and make flavor better. To take best advantage of this method, make mounds at least 3 feet in diameter or create raised rows at least 2 feet wide. Drape black plastic over sides and anchor using soil or heavy objects. Cut two-one foot slits in an 'X' and plant the veggies in the center of the 'X'.
- ⊙ Plant avocado, citrus and other tender trees.

SHOPPING

Smart buys: sun-loving tomatoes and peppers.