

Perennials

We have got a great selection of perennials available now with more coming ready almost daily. We have lots of varieties for both sun and shade. If you need to find perennials for a particular situation, we have lists of plants for wet, dry, butterflies, hummingbirds, shade etc. They make it easy to choose the right plants for the place you need them. If you are looking for perennials, it's good to stop in every few weeks to see what is coming into bloom. We don't force our perennials into bloom or ship from the south like the big boxes do so our plants bloom when they should. We also only stock plants that are hardy for this area. Many of my customers have bought plants at the big boxes that were sold as perennial but weren't hardy for here. There is no use in wasting money on plants that won't come back next year. This makes them very expensive annuals! Not to mention the frustration and wasted work.

Astilbe are starting to bloom. We have them in heights ranging from 10 inches to over 3 feet. They are a great part shade plant. The one thing they need is consistent soil moisture. They really suffer if they are allowed to dry out. This is definitely not the plant for under trees. They come in colors ranging from white to pinks to reds and fuschia. They also are good cut flowers. The foliage looks good for the rest of the season even when they are not in bloom.

We have lots of other shade plants. We have a very good selection of hostas – close to 50 kinds. They can be the backbone of a shady garden. The foliage looks nice all season and you get the bonus of flowers. The variety of foliage colors means that you can plant several types and get a completely different look with each one. We have them in heights from 4" to 3'.

There are 3 new varieties of hellebores that just came in and will be ready to sell in a few weeks. These are very hardy part to full shade plants. They are also tolerant of dry areas. I have one growing and flourishing under a large maple tree. They bloom very early – March to April and even into May. They combine nicely with early blooming bulbs. The evergreen foliage is a bonus in the winter garden.

We have a good selection of ferns available right now. We also have several new varieties that will become ready in a few weeks. Some people with shady areas don't like to use ferns because they don't flower. You have to realize that flowering in shady areas is harder to come by. It's good to rely on foliage color and texture to a certain extent. The lacy foliage of ferns is pretty all season. They also come in silver or lighter green colors that are very pretty.

Out in the sun perennials, we just got in some very nice peonies. Most of them are very fragrant. This is a nice old fashioned perennial. Many of us remember them from mom's or grandma's garden. They are really nice cut flowers that last for a while in the house.

We have some milkweed that will be ready soon and more coming in that will be ready in July. We have some swamp milkweed in white available right now. Orange butterfly weed will be available in August. I am still looking for butterfly bush but haven't had any success yet.

We have lots of other perennials ready and waiting for you. Stop in and see what we have.

Watering

I write about watering all the time but people still don't seem to get it. This is one of the most important things to do correctly when growing plants. Screwing this up can be really bad.

#1 Always water deeply and thoroughly. Going out every day and sprinkling the soil so that the top 1" gets watered is the worst thing that you can do. Roots will grow where there is water. If the roots only grow in the top couple inches of soil, it becomes hard to keep them adequately watered as they get bigger. If you water deeply, they have the ability to access moisture deeper in the soil. Setting up a sprinkler or soaker hose allows you to get the water deeper in the soil. Putting down an inch of water once or twice a week is usually sufficient for most plants. Put a small container like a tuna can or margarine tub and run the water until there is an inch in the container.

#2 Don't overwater. I have had people tell me that over the last three years when we have had too much rain that they were still watering their plants on almost a daily basis. Too much water can be as bad as too little. It can cause the roots to rot. This can seriously damage the plant's ability to grow or even kill it. This also causes fertilizer to leach out faster. So even if you are feeding your plants, they may not be getting it. You can't control the rain but don't compound it by adding more. There are no plants growing in the ground that need a through soaking every day. Only water when they really need it.

#3 Wilting is not always a sign of dryness. Wilting can be a sign that you are overwatering and have caused the roots to start to rot. Let the plants dry out some and you may save them. Wilting, especially in newly planted plants, is because they are unable to take up enough water to replace what they are using. This is very common in tomatoes. It also can happen in really hot weather. Continuing to dump water on them will cause them to rot because they can't use all that water.

#4 Let's talk about the other side – not enough water. All plants need water to grow. I often hear that people don't water any plants that are planted in the ground and wonder why they aren't doing well. You generally can't rely on nature to give plants all the water they need. You will at some time need to water. If you are unable or unwilling to do so, don't plant anything. Every time a plant dries out to the point of wilting, there is damage. If it happens often enough, the damage is irreversible.

#5 Trees and shrubs will need watered in very dry weather and when newly planted. I have found the easiest way to water shrub beds is with a soaker hose. I usually water individual trees and shrubs by taking a bucket, gallon jug or kitty litter jug and poking a small hole in the bottom. Sit it near the plant and fill it with water. The water slowly seeps in to the ground. Remember the roots that can take up water on mature trees and shrubs are out at the edge of the foliage. Putting water near the trunk is ineffective. For large plants put several containers spaced out around the edge.

#6 Watering containers. Plants in pots rely on you to give them a lot of the water they need. Generally, they dry out at least once a day if it doesn't rain. In really hot weather, they may need watered twice a day. To alleviate some watering, don't put plants in too small a pot. If you have trouble keeping up with watering, don't use clay pots. They dry out faster than plastic. Add Soil Moist to your soil. This stores water so the plants can access it when the soil dries out. It is very effective in reducing watering. You can add it to already planted plants by poking holes with a pencil or stick and dropping some in each hole. Putting a saucer under plants that are out where they can get rain is a double edged sword. During the spring or rainy times, it will keep the plants too wet because water sits in it all the time. During the summer or dry times, it may help keep them from drying out so much. So if you are using saucers, you will have to be careful. I suggest watering containers in the morning and then checking again in the afternoon or evening.

Herbs

We still have lots of kinds of herbs available. There is still time to plant up some pots of herbs for on your patio. If you usually don't cook with herbs, summer is a great time to start. They are easy to use in salads of all kinds and when grilling. They go great with fresh vegetables. Start with a few kinds of herbs and look for some simple recipes to use them in. The internet is a treasure trove of herb recipes. A simple recipe that I use is put assorted chopped up fresh vegetables on a piece of heavy duty aluminum foil. Drizzle with olive oil. Add some garlic, salt, pepper and your herb(s) of choice. Seal it up and cook either on the grill or in the oven until tender. It's really simple and tastes great. That's the kind of herb recipes I like – simple. Once you start cooking with herbs, you will want to find new ways to use them. Add one of the lemon flavored herbs and/or mint to your iced tea. Make herbal butters. Mince up herbs and add to the butter. You can also add garlic too. It's good on fresh veggies, meats, bread and rolls and popcorn. Freeze it for later use. Since a lot of us are going to be sticking closer to home this summer, this is a great time to try some herbs.

Mint

I thought I'd talk about mint. It is one of the easiest herbs to grow. It will take sun to part shade. It is one of the few herbs that will grow in some shade. It will also tolerate fairly wet conditions. It grows really fast so you should be able to get an almost constant harvest. The main problem with mint is also that it grows fast. I don't recommend planting mint in a garden. It is almost impossible to keep it from spreading rampantly. Only plant it in the ground if it is in a place where it can do its own thing without causing problems. I say plant it in a pot. Don't let the pot touch the dirt. Keep it on a patio or deck or sit it on a stone to keep the roots from coming out the hole. Cut off any runners or flowers. This should keep it contained.

Mint comes in many more types than peppermint and spearmint, although these are still the favorites. We have orange, lime, grapefruit, apple, chocolate mint, strawberry, lemon bergamot, banana and even mojito. They all can be used in iced tea and other drinks. Chop up some and mix them in a fruit salad. Sprinkle them on iced cream. They can be used in all kinds of baking. A simple recipe for peas is defrost frozen peas. Add mint, onions, cooked bacon and plain yogurt. It makes a quick salad. Mints are probably one of the most versatile herbs but I don't think people use them as much as they should. I don't think it is an herb most people think of using or they only use it in iced tea.

Zucchini Ricotta Pasta

16 oz. of a small pasta
1 Tbl. Olive oil
2 pounds Zucchini, sliced ¼ “
4 cloves garlic, chopped
¼ cup basil, chopped
¼ cup mint, chopped
Juice of 2 lemons
¾ cup ricotta or cottage cheese
Salt and pepper to taste
Red pepper flakes, optional

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside. In a large pan, heat olive oil over medium heat and cook garlic and zucchini until tender, 8-10 minutes. Stir frequently so they cook uniformly. Add pasta, cheese, herbs and lemon juice to pan with the zucchini. Mix well to coat. Taste for flavor. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with lemon wedges and parmesan cheese. Serves 6. Add yellow zucchini for color. Substitute any herbs you would like to.

To Do List

- Weed, weed, weed. The less weeds go to seed the less weeds you will have.
- Mulch everything. Trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, herbs and vegetables will all benefit from a good mulch
- Water as necessary.
- Prune flowering shrubs as they finish blooming.
- Keep annuals and perennials deadheaded. Many perennials will rebloom.
- Label your perennial and herb gardens.
- Divide and move perennials as necessary as long as they aren't in bloom.
- Add new perennials to your beds to fill in when you lack things in bloom.
- Fertilize everything.
- Cut herbs to freeze or dry for the winter.
- Lime lawns and perennial gardens.

Soil Conditioner

We are still waiting for our shipment of soil conditioner. They are unable to give us even an approximate date that we will receive it. If you would like a call when it comes in, let us know and we will put you on the list.

Plant Labels

You should label your perennial and herb gardens. Your memory is no better than mine but I can identify plants better than you can and I still label plants. We have really nice metal markers. We sell a ton of them and get a lot of repeat customers. They should last forever.

Roundup

I'm getting a lot of questions about Roundup. I can only give you my opinion. I think most of the people getting sick from it are people that sprayed acreage with it. They probably didn't take the necessary precautions. Many of them sprayed different formulations of it that contain other chemicals. For those of us that are spraying a few dandelion in our patio or a small patch of poison ivy or a hard to kill weed, I think we are safe. Don't spray until it's running off the plant. Don't spray in windy weather. When you're done, go in and wash up. These minimal uses should be safe.

Organic Pest Controls

There are more and more products on the market that are safer controls to use in your yard. Always use the least toxic product to take care of any problem. We have to stop dumping chemicals every where to take care of minor problems. Almost daily, I get people asking what to spray on their plants because there is one hole in one leaf on an entire plant. This is not something you should be spraying for. You don't even know if the insect is still there. Only spray if there is enough damage to become very unsightly or could really be harming the plant. Try some of these products in your garden.

Diatomaceous earth – good for ants, earwigs and other creepy crawlies

Sluggo – Slug bait that is safe around edible plants and pets

Safer products – Insecticides and fungicides that are extremely nontoxic

Milky spore – a lawn treatment for grubs that only harms grubs

Neem oil – very safe insecticide

Bt – biological that only kills caterpillars

All seasons oil – an oil-based insecticide that smothers all stages of insects

25% off any one perennial

Limited to stock on hand Expires July 12, 2020

Fertilizing

If you want your plants of all kinds to look their best, you need to fertilize. Unfortunately, I think most people don't really fertilize anything. Plants in a home landscape don't have any other way to get food. In the wild, decomposing plant material will give them food. This is not generally available in your yard. You need to supply their food on a regular basis.

Since I don't think most people understand fertilizers, let's start at the beginning. What are those 3 numbers on the fertilizer bags? They stand for nitrogen (N), phosphorus (p) and potassium (K). They will always be in that order. This shows the percent by weight of each nutrient. These are the macronutrients that all plants need in the largest quantity to survive. There are micronutrients that plants need in way smaller amounts. Some foods will have them, some don't. They usually aren't a problem, so you probably won't need to worry about them. Whereas, if your plants lack nitrogen, phosphorus or potassium, then you can have problems.

Nitrogen is responsible for green growth. It spurs leafy growth and rich green color. Pale green, spindly or even yellowish plants indicate a lack of nitrogen. Excess nitrogen causes overly lush growth and little fruiting and flowering.

Phosphorus helps with root growth and flowering and fruiting. Plants lacking in phosphorus are dull green and can have purplish stems. Sparse or no flowering is another sign.

Potassium is important for the general health of the plant. It helps form chlorophyll and helps with disease resistance. It works in conjunction with phosphorus. There are no definitive symptoms of a deficiency but the plant will over all look bad.

The best way to know what your soil needs is to do a soil test. The best way to do this is to get a test kit through your local Penn State extension office. There is one located in every county. The test is very easy to do. Follow the simple instructions and send it off to Penn State. They will send you back an easy to understand paper that tells you all about your soil and the nutrients it has or lacks. It's good to do a test for each type of plant that you are growing, such as lawns, vegetables or perennials because they will give a recommendation specifically for each type of crop.

Also in those recommendations is one for lime. If most people don't fertilize, even less use lime. Lime is used to change the pH of your soil - basically how acidic or alkaline your soil is. Most plants in your yard, except for acid loving trees and shrubs, like alkaline soil. This means somewhere around a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Unfortunately, Western PA soils tend to be on the more acidic side. This is why you need to use lime. Ideally, find out your soil's pH by getting a soil test. The information you get back will tell you exactly how much lime you need to add for the crop you are growing. If you don't do a test and you have never limed, you can't hurt anything by adding 50 pounds of lime per 1000 sqft. But I have seen lime requirements come back on soil tests that are many times this amount. So although 50 pounds per 1000 sqft. may not hurt anything, it also may not do much to correct your soil's pH. Why is soil pH so important? An incorrect pH can tie up nutrients in the soil and make them unavailable to the plants. This means that even though you are fertilizing your plants, they may not be able to take up the nutrients and use them. This can cause not only the obvious signs of nutrient deficiencies but also cause blossom end rot in tomatoes and peppers. Soil microorganisms are more active at a more neutral pH. This makes for healthier soil.

Adding organic matter to your soil can also make nutrients more available to the plants. It will also make changing the pH level of your soil easier. Clay soil takes more lime and more time to change the pH.

Vines

We just got a big shipment in of clematis. They will be ready to sell in a few weeks. In the meantime, we have many other varieties of vines available. We have many varieties of honeysuckle. We also have wisteria, trumpet vine, akebia, silver lace and variegated porcelainberry. There is a vine for any location. But remember they are called vines for a reason. They vine! This means many of them can grow to 20 or 30 feet or more. These are not plants to put on a 4 foot trellis.

Preen

If the amount of weeding you have to do is getting you down, try some natural Preen. I am specifying natural Preen because it is organic. It is simply corn gluten meal. It is safe around food crops and herbs. It is safe for pets (mine like to eat it) and kids. It doesn't affect plant growth in any way except it adds a little nitrogen to the soil. Don't confuse this with regular Preen which is a chemical that can't be used around edibles and is not safe for pets, kids or you. It also keeps many perennials from spreading.

Natural preen works by drying out the initial root of germinating seeds. It does not affect existing weeds or perennial weeds that come up from the root. The best way to use Preen is to thoroughly weed a section of a garden, spread the Preen and then mulch over it or spread it over the mulch. Do not even let the weeded area go for a few hours without applying the Preen. If the weed seeds are able to germinate completely, the product will be less effective. Apply it a couple times a year for the best results. Many of my customers are really happy with it.

Fairy Gardening

We have a lot of really cute fairy and miniature gardening items. It's a neat thing to do in your garden or in pots. Kids really enjoy it and so do adults. I have many customers doing it with their kids, grandkids or nieces and nephews. Some of them take a few new items with them every time they visit. There are some people who are doing it inside in house plants or making a display with artificial flowers and such. You can make your display as simple or elaborate as you would like.

25% off all Fairy Garden Items

Limited to stock on hand

Mailing List

Our mailing list has gotten out of hand. We are trying to whittle it down. If you are on the list and would like to remain on, please let us know. If you last year or this year checked your name off in the book or let us know another way, you don't have to do it again. If your address is wrong or you are receiving it under another name, please let us know. You can call us 724 836-2255, fax us 724 836-2418 or e-mail us at info@shadowwoodgardens.com.

Fourth of July Hours

We will be closed on Saturday July 4. Other than that, we will be open our regular hours: Tues-Sat 10-6 Sunday 11-4 Monday closed

10% off any one Gift or Garden Item

Limited to stock on hand. Not good on handcrafted items.
Expires July 12, 2020

I know times are tough right now but I hope you have been taking time to smell the roses. Take the time to enjoy your family, enjoy the outdoors, enjoy your hobbies and pets. You could also clean your house but that's no fun.

