

# May Monthly Reminders



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

Cooperative  
Extension

Pima County -Master Gardener Program

## **Planting**

- Plant heat loving flowers such as moss rose, gaillardia, zinnia, Madagascar periwinkle, verbena, celosia, vinca, angelonia, and salvia, as well as desert-adapted perennials such as autumn sage, gaura, and bulbine.
- Plant and transplant cacti, agaves, palms, and other heat-loving plants such as desert trees. Plant so that the top set of roots is located at or just below the soil surface.
- The best months to plant cacti are March through October because warm soil temperatures facilitate root growth. Raised, slightly mounded, and open locations with fast-draining soil provide good homes for cacti. Keep the south-facing orientation. Whenever possible, orient the plant in the direction it has been growing. This will help the plant adjust to its new environment and limit the risk of sunburn. If the original orientation is not known, protect the newly planted cactus with shade cloth (30% sun blockage) until new growth appears. (Refer to *Cactus, Agave, Yucca, and Ocotillo* [AZ1225](#))
- Plant seeds of cantaloupe, cucumber, peppers, watermelon, okra, cowpeas, asparagus beans (also called "yard-long beans,") and summer squash. Plant sweet potatoes.

## **Fertilizing**

- For oranges, tangerines, and grapefruit, apply 1/3 of the total in January-February, 1/3 in March-April, and 1/3 in May-June. This will be the 3rd of 3 annual feedings for these varieties of citrus. Evenly spread it under the tree, starting one foot from the trunk and continuing out several feet past the end of the branches. Water the fertilizer into the soil immediately after applying. If young leaves remain yellow, apply chelated iron to the soil following label directions. (Refer to *Citrus Fertilization Chart for Arizona* [AZ 1671](#))
- Fertilize palms in mid spring and early summer. Then water thoroughly. Use a "palm special" fertilizer that contains about 3 times as much nitrogen and potassium as phosphorous (the first and third numbers on the bag are approximately 3 times the middle number), plus Mg and micronutrients. (Refer to *Arizona Landscape Palms* [AZ1021](#))
- Fertilization is not necessary for native cacti but will benefit flowering hybrids. If used, apply an all-purpose fertilizer at half-strength early in the growing season.

## **Watering**

- May is one of the hottest and driest months of the year, often with hot, dry winds; plants need more frequent irrigation to keep them healthy. Adjust your watering frequencies for May-October as per Arizona Department of Water Resources guidelines.
- Vegetable and flower gardens may require daily watering. Lawns should be irrigated every three days. Non-desert trees and shrubs will need a good soaking every 7-10 days. Use a soil probe to assure water is getting down 24-36". Desert-adapted trees and shrubs may require a soaking irrigation this month to prevent drought stress. Water slowly to prevent run-off.
- Cacti generally do not require irrigation, but during a particularly dry summer they will benefit from some irrigation – no more than every two weeks.

## **Maintenance**

- Spray Italian cypress, juniper and other evergreens as well as roses and pyracanthas with a strong jet of water to remove spider mites. Yellowing needles or leaves and fine webbing are the first signs of spider mite damage. Do this weekly in May and June. Leaf-cutter bees may cut circles in the new leaves of tender plants such as roses and bougainvillea. While unsightly, it does not harm the plant and no action is necessary.
- Citrus may drop fruit; it is normal as the tree drops fruit it can't support. Citrus may also drop old leaves to replace them with new ones.
- Prepare for the extreme heat of summer. Plants properly watered and fertilized develop the vigorous growth that allows them to better endure hot weather. Most vegetables and many newly planted landscape plants will need some shade when temperatures reach 95 and above. One solution is 30% or 40% shade cloth. Add 3 inches of mulch under plants to keep roots cool, suppress weeds and reduce moisture loss.