

Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 1

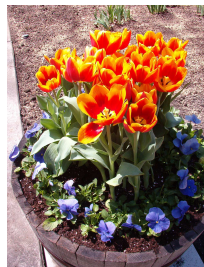
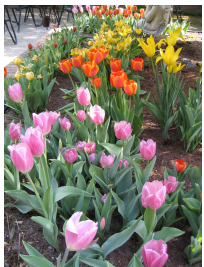
Spring Edition

March 2003

Is It Spring Yet?

Spring is a blessed season and one I look forward to with great expectation.

Bulbs are great spring plants and once the Tulips and Daffodils start opening, I get eager to make some bouquets. The first article this quarter offers some tips when assembling your own flowering bulb arrangements. Also, while you're out gathering spring blooms, now is the time to begin battling with the slugs. Taking preventative measures early is the key to combating those slimy "Hosta Wreckers". Not sure how to handle bulb foliage after they have bloomed or don't know what to do with your Easter Lily once Easter has past? The articles on page 3 will give you the answers you're looking for. Spring is indeed a busy time in the garden, but it's also important to take time and smell the roses (once they start blooming). After all, enjoying the fruits of one's labor is what it's all about. I hope that the recipe on page 4 will help you do just that.



Flowering Bulbs in Bouquets

Daffodils exude a substance through their stems that is harmful for other flowers, so before you mix daffodils with other blooms, place them in a container of water for at least 12 hours. A faster option is to place cut ends of daffodils in a bleach and water solution (5 drops bleach to 1 quart water) for an hour before mixing them with other flowers.

Before arranging **Tulips**, re-cut the base of the stem with a clean, sharp knife. This will open up the flower's water uptake channels. To straighten curved stems of flowering bulbs such as Tulips, Daffodils, Anemones and Ranunculus, wrap the stems tightly in newspaper, then place them in a container of water. The stems will straighten as they drink water. Tulips and Anemones are especially thirsty flowers so check the water level often.

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Slugs: Prevent Your Plants From Being "Slimed"

Let's face it, only its mother could love a slug. To us, they're sneaky, slimy marauders. Slug-thugs follow a typical pattern in their crimes: They like moist conditions and generally feed by night. They eat any soft-tissued plants, and particularly love Strawberries, Lettuce, and Hosta leaves.

Try these slug-controlling tips:

- In spring, as the plants most affected are starting to peek out of the soil, lay damp newspaper around them. Do this in the evening, as slugs feed at night. In the morning go out & pick up the paper & throw away. You won't get all the baby slugs, but you'll reduce their population.
- During the day, look for slugs under boards and inverted pots; then destroy.
- Try laying rings of bare copper wire around plants, or set a continuous vertical border of copper strips around a bed. The copper is said to emit a slight electrical charge that deters slugs. (Expensive, but worth it if you have rare Hosta species).
- Set out shallow pans of beer. The yeast attracts slugs, and they drown in the beer. Clean and reset traps daily. (Messy but effective).
- Spread rings of wood ashes or horticulture-grade diatomaceous earth (DE) around plants. The rough texture deters soft-bellied slugs. Re-apply after rain.
- Put 1 part non-sudsing ammonia to 2 parts water in a spray bottle & apply it

hostas about once a week, more often in spring. A cheap home remedy if you don't mind the continual applications.

- A new slug bait made of iron phosphate pellets that disrupt a slug's digestive system is reportedly safe round plants, pets, and birds. It's sold as Escar-Go from Gardens Alive!, (812)537-8650.

The best bet is to grow plants they don't like. Consider some of these:

Slug Resistant Perennials

Catmint	Peony
Daylily	Phlox
Feverfew	Poppies
Forget-me-not	Sedums
Goat's Beard	Shasta Daisy
Lamb's Ear	Snapdragons
Lady's Mantle	Sweet William
Lavender	Tansy
Maltese Cross	Wallflowers

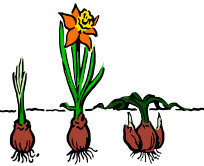
Slug-Resistant Hostas

'Aspen Gold'	'Maruba Iwa'
'Aurora Borealis'	'Frances Williams'
'Big Daddy'	'Millie's Memories'
'Black Hills'	'Samurai'
'Blue Moon'	'Krossa Regal'
'Sea Lotus Leaf'	'Sum and Substance'
'Leather Sheen'	'Spilt Milk'
'Love Pat'	'Blue Umbrellas'
'Sultana'	'Bright Lights'
'Lucy Vitols'	'Blue Shadow'
'Camelot'	'Midas Touch'
'Just So'	'June'

For a complete list of resistant plants or more information on slugs, check out these websites:

gardensplus.ca/hostacharacteristics.htm
haywardm.supanet.com/resistant_plants.html

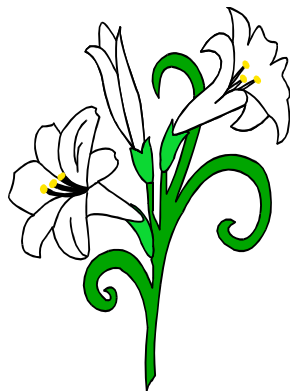
Bulb Aftercare



Even after the flowers are gone, your spring-blooming bulbs will benefit from a bit of TLC. These tips will keep them coming back bigger and better next spring.

- Trim off the spent flower, but leave the stalk and leaves until they're thoroughly brown, then pull them out with only the gentlest of tugs. The bulbs need the foliage to help them rejuvenate.
- Keep the area where the bulbs are planted mulched and well watered but not soggy. It's a good idea to plant some annuals on top of the bulbs. Not only do the annuals shade the bulbs and keep them cool, they also ensure you'll keep the soil adequately moist.
- Fertilize each fall with bone meal or some kind of specially mixed bulb food.

Easy-Care Easter Lilies



A common gift plant this time of year, Easter lilies (*Lilium longiflorum*) will thrive if you follow a few rules, says Carolyn Mack of the Easter Lily Research Foundation. Select compact plants with healthy foliage, and buds at several stages of maturity. Remove protective sleeves from pots—they can encourage root rot. Set plants in bright, indirect light, away from drafts. Keep daytime temperatures at 60 to 65

degrees; slightly cooler at night. When plants bloom, remove the yellow anthers (this prolongs bloom life and prevents pollen from staining). Cut off spent blooms, and water only as needed.

Don't Throw Em' Away!

Potted Easter lilies can grow outdoors in Zones 5 to 9 (some cultivars are hardier). One frost has passed, plant bulbs 3" deep in a sunny spot, 12 to 18 apart in a well drained soil that's rich in organic matter. Mound 3" of soil over the bulb. Cut the dead stems back to the soil surface. Water as needed and use a slow-release 19-6-12 fertilizer. With luck, the plant may bloom again in few months, or if all goes well, the next year. Here in Michigan however, don't look for those beautiful blooms at Easter. They're more likely to be in flower in late June or July!

Lilies need good winter protection, so pile on the mulch in fall. Layer leafy mulch (shredded leaves/grass clippings) to a depth of 3 to 4" and woody mulch (double grind hardwood) to a depth of 2 to 3".

Blossoms Afloat



A single blossom floating in a glass dish is sometimes all you need to bring a touch of spring (or summer) to an indoor or outdoor table.

It's also the best way to show off Peonies, Clematis, Gardenias and Roses whose voluptuous petals give them singular drama. Most of these blooms will float naturally, but to keep lower petals from getting soggy, set them atop a glass doughnut (sold at florists or craft stores for about \$1.50 each).



Blueberry Lemon Coffee Cake



2 1/4 cups Bisquick® 1 egg
 1 cup frozen blueberries 1/3 cup sugar
 grated peel of 1 med. lemon 2/3 cup milk
 lemon glaze (see directions below)

Heat oven to 400°F. Grease a round 9" pan. Beat egg in medium bowl. Stir in Bisquick, sugar, milk and lemon peel. Gently stir in blueberries. Spread evenly in pan. Bake 20 to 25 min. Cool 10 minutes; drizzle with glaze.

Glaze: Stir 2/3 cup powdered sugar and 3 to 4 teaspoons lemon juice until smooth.

Gardener Gatherings

Places to Go & Things to Learn

What & Where

Landscape Basics Seminar

Sponsored by Advanced Financial Planning
 call 734-524-9408 for directions & details

March 29 12:00 PM

Matthaei Botanical Gardens

Spring Plant Sale

May 2, 3 & 4

call 734-998-7061 for directions & details

Detroit News/English Gardens


Spring Perennial Ex-Change



May 11 or 17

call 313-278-4433 for directions to all 5

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or earthenjoy@att.net

Kitchen Garden Basics

Got the taste for homegrown food? Having a kitchen garden is just what you need. Here are some basics to get you started: 

- **Choose a sunny site.** Vegetables need at least 6 to 8 hours of sun daily.
- **Healthy soil.** Dig down at least 8" and remove rocks, debris and weeds. Then mix in a 4" layer of compost. If you have clay soil, raised beds are best.
- **Fertilize thoughtfully.** Various kinds of manure and other kinds of organic fertilizers are needed by vegetables, but don't guess at how much to use. Follow recommendations on the label. 
- **Water generously.** Don't wait for plants to wilt to let you know they're dry. Water daily, morning is the best time.
- **Follow space recommendations.** Measure space between plants or seeds. They will grow to fill in the area sooner than you think.
- **Stay ahead of weeds.** Use mulch liberally and pull weeds as soon as you spot them.
- **Pest control.** Planting vegetables will encourage wildlife, rabbits, gophers etc. into your yard. Deter these with fences, repellents or noisemakers. Then there's the issue of crawling, flying and buzzing insects. Control them with organic products made with soap, oils, botanical extracts or row covers. 
- **Disease.** Vegetables are subject to many types of blights, spots, wilts, fungus and rusts. To prevent or reduce these problems buy resistant varieties, space plants correctly for good air circulation, water regularly, and discard any sickly plants. Know what the problem is before you treat it!
- **Crop rotation.** Do this for health purposes and to make the most of the season. Begin the season with lettuce, spinach, peas, beets (cool crops) then alternate to tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans (warm crops). Repeat the cool crops as the season comes to a close. 