

# Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 1

Spring Edition

March 2010

## Spring has Sprung!

I've been getting spring fever since February, how about you? I've attend some gardening classes/seminars & come ready for this season with a fresh attitude & creative new ideas. Some plants on **MY** list of **MUST HAVES** for my "lab garden" this season are....

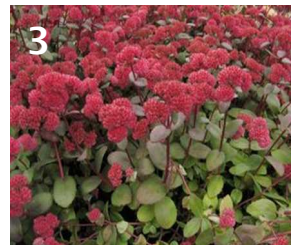
1. **Weeks Roses 'Cinco de Mayo'**. **YES** it's a rose but I can't resist the color(s) it offers. This one starts a rusty red & changes to shades of smokey lavender as the flower matures.

2. **Proven Winners 'Invincibelle Spirit' Hydrangea**. **YES** it's a Hydrangea but I can't resist the "pink" color, not to mention that it's a form of 'Annabelle' the **BEST** & most **EASY** care for us 'Michiganders'.

3. **Sedum 'Red Cauli'...(upright Stonecrop)**. This one might be a bit hard to find, but I will look diligently for it as it has deep red stems, blue-grass foliage & pink flowers that turn to bright red in fall.

4. **Hemerocallis 'Custard Candy'**. I'm such a sucker for plants that are variegated or two toned. The description of this daylily says it's a soft lemon yellow color (I'm kinda thinking the color of 'Happy Returns') with a raspberry eye,

color (I'm kinda thinking the color of 'Happy Returns') with a raspberry eye, eye, is a mid-season re-bloomer, with ruffled petals & 4" flowers. Guess we'll have to see if it's all that.



As with all the plants I test, if they do well for me in my garden & perform as the descriptions say, you can rest assured that I'll be suggesting them for your gardens!

### In This Issue

- \*Spring has Sprung!
- \*Lovely Easter Lily
- \*When is it Safe to Plant
- \*Tomatoes Are Tops
- \*Gardener Gatherings



## Lovely Easter Lily

Easter lilies are a common gift plant this time of year. Here's how to keep your lily looking good all season long:

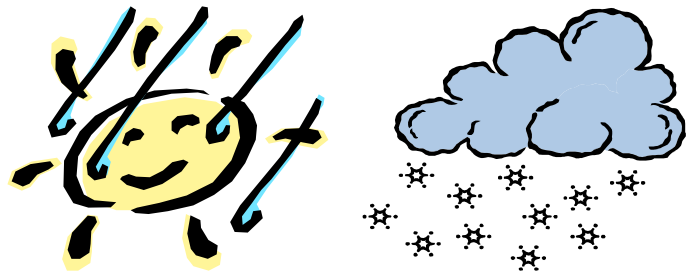
**Always choose healthy plants,** be it for you or someone else. Select compact plants with healthy, dark green leaves & buds at several stages of maturity.

**Keep it cool.** Keep daytime temperatures around 65° F. Set plants in bright, indirect light, away from drafts. When plants bloom, remove the yellow anthers to prolong bloom life and prevent pollen from staining. Remove spent flowers.

**Water well,** but don't over water. Many people have the problem of "killing their plants with kindness". Water when soil is dry to the touch. If the pot is wrapped in decorative foil or plastic, poke a hole in that material at the bottom of the pot. Place a saucer underneath to catch excess water. Good drainage is a must. Doing this will keep the plant from becoming over saturated with water & rotting the bulb.

**Keep away from kitty.** Easter lily leaves are poisonous to cats, causing lethargy, vomiting, kidney failure, and even death. According to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, cats are the only animal affected. If your cat eats the leaves, take the animal to a veterinarian right away.

**Don't toss 'em,** their still good! Once all the blooms have gone, cut the remaining stalk down to at least 1/2. Store in the garage or basement, water to keep damp (not wet). When the ground warms up (late April early May) plant in your garden. Mark area with a stake so you remember where they are & don't plant something else there. They won't re-bloom that same season, but next year you'll enjoy their beauty & fragrance in late June or July.



***Sunshine is delicious,***

***Rain is refreshing,***

***Wind braces us up,***

***Snow is exhilarating.***

***There really is no such thing  
as bad weather,***

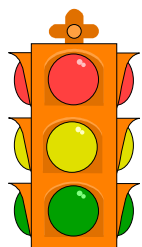
***Only different kinds***

***of good weather.***



—John Ruskin





## When IS it SAFE to Plant?

The time for spring planting of trees, shrubs, perennials & cold-hardy vegetables begins when the air & soil are not only warming, but drying out as well. A special element to really bear in mind for those of you with clay soil.

- To test for moisture, take a handful of soil, squeeze it, then release. If the soil stays in a tight ball, you need to wait. Don't plant until the soil crumbles when it is released. Clay soil people, this probably won't be the case. Depending on how moist of a spring we have, you may still have to hold off a while longer to plant as clay will retain the moisture.
- Another clue from nature is the Forsythia. Soil temperatures usually have reached 50 degrees by the time forsythia is in full bloom (late April or early May).

- Soil temperatures should be in the upper 50s or 60s for planting trees, shrubs and perennials' already in leaf. However, dormant trees, shrubs & roses can be planted earlier.

- The possibility of late frost is a factor. In metro Detroit, there's only a 50% chance of frost by April 24. **WATCH**



**THE WEATHER CHANNEL!** I do.....matter of fact, I live my life around it from March to November. Are they accurate?

I've learned to take what they say 1st, then check with the local channels. I make my decision somewhere in between. How's that for an "accurate" forecast? Anyway, the last frost date is scheduled for May 12. However, as a professional, I won't plant annuals till the **END of MAY!** For frost dates elsewhere, you'll have to check with your state's/county's Extension office.

- Wait to plant warmth-loving plants like tomatoes, impatiens & summer-flowering bulbs like dahlias until all danger of frost has passed and nighttime air. temperatures stay above 60 degrees. That may be late May or early June, depending on the year & location.

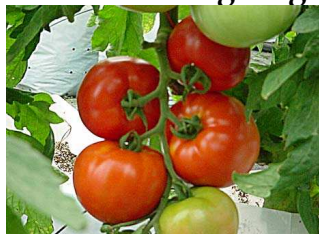


**OH, & SPEAKING OF TOMATOES.....**

# Tomatoes Are Tops

More than 90% of all home gardeners grow tomatoes making them the most popular garden plant. Here's some fun facts about this favorite fruit:

- Yep, I said FRUIT. It's not a vegetable. A fruit is the edible part of the plant that contains seeds, while a vegetable is the edible stem, leaves & roots of a plant.
- There are MORE than 500 varieties on the market, but there are 10,000 varieties grown throughout the world.
- One tomato plant can produce 15 tomatoes in a season & each average size fruit (5 oz) only contain 35 calories. This size also contains as much fiber as a slice of whole wheat bread.
- Salsa has replaced ketchup as the top selling condiment in the U.S.
- Cooked tomatoes have a higher concentration of Lycopene than non-cooked tomatoes. Lycopene is the stuff that makes tomatoes red, it's also what researchers have found to possibly prevent cancer.
- Store tomatoes at room temperature as cold temps (refridgeration) lessens the flavor. Storing them stem side down also helps them last longer.
- **Frost Alert...**if you have fruits still on the vine, pull the whole plant up by the roots. Hang upside down in a cool garage or basement till ripe.



- **Green Tomatoes...**yes, you can fry them but maybe you'd rather store them with some apples or wrap them loosely in newspaper in a cool place to ripen faster.



## Gardener Gatherings

### What & Where

**Matthaei Botanical Gardens**  
**Spring Plant Sale**  
**May 7, 8 & 9**

call 734-647-7600 or 734-647-7697  
for details & directions

**Livonia Garden Club Plant Sharing**  
**May 15th 9:00 AM 11:00 PM**  
at Historical Greenmead  
call Liz at 734-425-6880 for details

**Novi Spring Perennial Exchange**  
**May 29th 9:00 AM 12:00 PM**  
Novi's Fuerst Park  
call 248-735-5640 for more info

**MSU Tollgate Gardens**  
**Spring Plant Sale**  
**June 5th 9:00 AM 2:00 PM**  
call 248-347-3860 for location & details

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or [earthenjoy@wowway.com](mailto:earthenjoy@wowway.com)