



May Tips



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May is a great month to plant heat loving plants. At this time plants seem to come alive and grow very fast including grasses. Plant annual flowers that thrive and bloom in the hot sunny days coming up such as petunias, salvia, begonias, and geraniums. This is a good time to transplant tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and melons. For an array of lettuces, choose from many different varieties and colors and plant seeds every three weeks till the warmer temperatures arrive. This will give you a continuous crop.

Using herbs in the landscape works well with the different sizes and colors of plants to choose from. Transplant dill, chives, cilantro, fennel, lavender, oregano, mint, sage, tarragon, and thyme. Rosemary and thyme make good ground covers, while lavender can be used as a small shrub-like perennial. There are different varieties of rosemary with different colored flowers. *Rosmarinus officinalis* can grow up to 6 feet tall. The plant is drought tolerant, and useful in erosion control. There is a low-growing form available known as prostrate rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis prostrates*, that is more manageable as a landscape groundcover or small shrub yet maintains the culinary quality of the straight species.

Sow seeds of warm season vegetables anywhere in southern California now, including lima beans, celery, corn, cucumbers, peppers, pumpkins, squashes and tomatoes. The following additional crops can be planted this month in south coastal areas but not interior valleys: snap beans, radishes, beets, chard, green onions.

Trellises for tomatoes and vining crops provide support for better fruit production with greater aeration and exposure of leaf area to sunlight.

If you are growing shallot, garlic and onions and the tops are starting to dry out stop the irrigation. This will allow the bulbs to form the dry layers for longer storage.

You still can plant various berry plants such as blueberries, raspberries and grapes. Give the newly planted plants an application of water-soluble fertilizer according to label instructions on the product.

Continue to mulch flower beds, fruit trees and shrubs. Mulching will give the plants some needed nutrients and keep moisture in the soil. Acceptable mulch materials include wood chips, ground bark and bark chips, clipping from cool-season grasses (tall fescue, ryegrass, bluegrass), and any other disease- and weed-free plant debris that is shredded or ground.

Pruning Trees

Fertilize established trees that are diagnosed as deficient in nitrogen or other plant essential nutrient since they are now actively growing. Newly planted trees and those that are less than 5 years old sometimes increase growth if fertilized with nitrogen fertilizer at this time of year. Prune off all unwanted “suckers” (these grow from the base of the plant) and “watersprouts” (which grow straight up from a branch). If they are not pruned off they will compete with the original plant for water and nutrients and produce no flowers or fruit.

Fruit Trees

Thin fruits from trees and vines as they may get too heavy and break branches or portions of vines. Thinning also promotes larger fruit size. It will give the fruit less competition and better aeration for healthy growth. Thin the fruit according to the age of the tree. With apples, pears, peaches, and nectarines, thin them 5-6 inches apart. Thin plums and apricots up to four inches apart. Nut trees and citrus usually thin themselves between now and mid-June.

Landscaping plants

Transplant ageratum, alyssum, globe amaranth, aster, baby's breath, bachelor buttons, balsam, begonia, bougainvillea, calendula, candytuft, cleome, coleus, columbine, coral bells, coreopsis, cosmos, daisies (gloriosa, English, marguerite, and Shasta).

Blooming plants can brighten up a garden quickly and provide lush foliage for those hot summer days. In light shade you can plant ageratum, Canterbury bells, lobelia, nicotiana, and salvia.

For fragrance plant gardenia, jasmine, mock orange and roses. For a lasting landscape plant cactus, succulents, and palms. Remove faded blooms and seedpods from spring blooming bulbs and plants. Cut back spring-blooming shrubs and vines to shape and promote flowering wood development for next year.

Mow the lawn with the mower height between two to three inches. It is not healthy to cut the grass more than 25% of the top at a time.

The featured plant for this month is [Dombeya Wallichii](#) - Tropical Hydrangea.