

## HORTICULTURE REPORT FOR MAY 2023

1. The exceptionally hot and dry weather of the last few months has tested our gardens to the limit! When you do water, soak the roots but try to avoid overhead watering except to remove dust and pollen.
2. Don't plant cool season plants like petunias and pansies etc., despite the fact that the stores are selling them cheaply. There's a reason for that. They don't do well in the summer, and they want to get rid of them. Various plants that can go in the ground now are verbena, vinca, gaillardia, black eyed Susan, marigolds, New Guinea impatiens, tropical sage (the salvia family) zinnias and milkweed for the monarch butterflies to eat. Bulbs like caladiums, gladiolus, canna, calla, and various other lilies can be planted now too.
3. If you haven't pruned back azaleas and camellias, do it now so they will set new flower buds during the summer. Pruning in fall cuts back on the number of spring blooms. For you brave people who have roses, now is the time to dust for black spot. Do it every two weeks, and also spray off the inevitable aphids. You can do that with a heavy blast from the hose. Lady bugs will be eating the aphids and you don't want to poison them. They will find their way back.
4. If you can't safely spray off aphids, and thrips are also a problem on new growth, keep natural remedies on hand, like Neem Oil or a homemade remedy made with soap and oil in water. Aphids reproduce every four or five days, so you really have to keep after them. As a responsible garden club member, it's important to use the least toxic remedies that we can and use the IPM or Integrated Pest Management protocol.
5. May is a good time to fertilize citrus in any or your trees are still surviving the various pests and diseases that ail them. Slow release specially formulated citrus fertilizer should be spread to the drip line. I would discourage the use of fertilizer spikes, as they tend to burn the roots nearby and the fertilizer gets washed straight down instead of being taken up by the whole root ball. Try to keep grass and weeds from under your citrus trees, and it's not really a good idea to have them edged around with plastic or concrete, or mulched. Another problem that occurs is that young citrus trees are planted too deeply. If your trees are failing, check to see if the trunk "flare" is above ground. If not, that may be your problem. Also, if you have leaf miners, cut those leaves off. Nothing can reach them.

Have a good summer, and hope for "right" weather for all our gardening needs.

Submitted by Valerie Ollinger