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Village Garden Center

Garden News by Eva Soued

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May Apple is known by many different names, Indian apple, Raccoonberry, wild lemon, hog apple and American mandrake. It is a perennial herb that can be found growing in moist loamy woodland soils on the East coast of North America from the Southern parts of Maine to Florida and **may be found as far West as Texas and Minnesota.**

It will grow to be around 18 inches in height and the stem will separate into two parts displaying broad palmate lobed leaves, looking very much like an umbrella when opened.

Growing very well in rich soil and deep shade, Mayapple or American Mandrake has many medicinal qualities and is still used widely by Native Americans. When fully ripe the fruit which resembles a small apple is eaten raw or made into pies, jams or marmalades.

The seeds and rinds, however, are not edible. When picked the fruit has a very sweet smell and after the foliage dies the roots can be harvested and used for various purposes.

Some of the constituents of the root are Alpha-peltatin, Gallic acid, and Kaempferol, which are currently under study for having anti-cancer properties because it interferes with cell division and being such could prevent the growth of cancerous cells.

The root has been widely used by Native Americans as a purgative, but while being a useful alternative medicine it should only be administered by a professional herbalist as in a large enough dose it will become toxic.



Dianthus

Dianthus are hardy, herbaceous, perennial plants that produce bright, fragrant blooms. Dianthus is a genus of about 300 species of flowering plants. The name Dianthus is from the Greek words for God and flowers. Its genus can include Carnations, Picotees, and Sweet William. Dianthus are easy to grow and prefer full sun, moderate climates, and rich, well drained soil. Perennial Dianthus is often evergreen or semi-evergreen. The dark green foliage stays evergreen in winter months except in northern climates. The evergreen foliage and the long flowering season allows for interesting year-around displays of foliage in the winter and flowers in spring, summer, and fall. Dianthus are used in containers, mixed plantings, cut flower gardens, scented gardens, butterfly gardens, and borders.

Dianthus is deer resistant and multiplies readily. Along with well drained soil, select a site with neutral to alkaline soil pH. Dianthus will not tolerate wet soils, especially in the winter. Remove spent blooms on tall varieties or cut back mounding plants after they flower to encourage rebloom. Dianthus plants need good air circulation and they should not be heavily mulched. A very light mulch at the base of the plant is sufficient for weed control. Use an light application all purpose fertilizer every 6 to 8 weeks to promote flowering. Dianthus may be divided every 3 to 4 years by digging the plant up and splitting the base into divisions and replanting. Water thoroughly upon replanting.

Note: I give my Dianthus a light buzz cut with my weed wacker. Just do not go too deeply into the mounds. Just buzzing over the spent flowers will do and encourage them to rebloom.



It's a bug eat

Bug world

Yellow Garden Spider

A lot of people tend to react to spiders - especially big ones - with fear. Garden spiders can get quite large, but before you run, scream, or squish, stop and think about the benefits of having spiders in your garden. Yes, spiders can be beneficial. They eat insects that cause problems for humans, such as wasps and mosquitoes. They do tend to be secretive and reclusive, which contributes to their creepy reputation. They move quickly when startled, and you never know when you will come upon one. But spiders are not trying to be sneaky in order to scare you; this elusiveness is how they survive. They can sneak up on their prey and remain still and out of sight for hours, keeping them safe from predators that would like to eat them. Let's take a look at some of the types of beneficial spiders that can be found in your garden.

Yellow Garden Orb-Weavers are spiders that weave large, beautiful webs that sometimes look as if they have writing down the middle (hence another name for these yellow-and-black striped beauties: writing spider). These spiders are quite large, and their elaborate webs are lethal to all kinds of flying pests, such as mosquitoes, moths, wasps, hornets, etc. Such webs can be annoying to humans, but there are few things more breath-taking than one of these orb webs covered in dew drops on a sunny morning.

You can encourage spiders in your garden by not spraying broad-spectrum insecticides (spiders are not insects, but they will succumb to insect sprays). Another thing you can do is spread thick mulch that gives hunting spiders a place to hide and spend the winter. Encourage web-weavers with an outside light that attracts flying insects. Spiders will weave their webs near the light to take advantage of the bugs.

Whats Up? At the Garden Center

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Green tip of the month

Make sure you crush the egg shells before you add them to your garden. Egg shells that are not crushed will break down very slowly.

Ways you can use egg shells grounds in your garden:

- Instead of throwing eggs shells away, put them in the bottom of plant pots instead of stones.

Egg shells are much lighter than stones and they are a great source of of nutrition.

- Place egg shells in a circle on top of the ground surface around tender plant stems such as peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, cabbage to deter slugs and cutworms.
- Place egg shells in the soil near tomatoes. Calcium is very useful to tomatoes because the extra calcium will help prevent blossom end rot.

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