



Photo credit: M. Foley

## This Month in the Garden

by Peggy Koppmann

**GREEN!** We've been waiting for those beautiful shades of green that make up May. There is something soothing about working outside surrounded by shades of mint green, moss, pine green, asparagus and emerald green. It's just another way of viewing the diversity of plants and reminding us that ... chlorophyll rules.

**Veggie Views** — Plant transplants of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and melons after soil has warmed to 60°F. Use 3-foot tall tomato cages for peppers and eggplants; 6-foot tall for tomatoes. Direct-seed squash, corn, and beans. Plant rows to run north to south to allow equal exposure to the sun. Protect cucumbers, melons, and squash from cucumber beetles with row covers, but remove when plants begin to blossom.

**Avoid the Shock** — You can still transplant evergreens, trees, and shrubs. Plant on a cloudy day, early morning to reduce heat and transplant shock. Keep the roots wet to avoid shrinking of roots. Trees suffering from transplant shock have difficulty leafing out resulting in a loss of carbohydrate reserves. Trees are a financial and ecological investment so take care to create the right conditions to ensure their survival. **Goodfruit.com** has an excellent article on transplanting.

**Bottoms Up** — Experiment with using capillary matting cut into circles on the saucers of outdoor plants/containers,

and cut to fit seed trays. The water is drawn up and transferred to plants from bottom up. It's suggested to encourage healthy root growth and to decrease the chances of over-watering. It does get icky, but may be worth trying.

**Gotta Have It** — You've seen robotic carpet cleaners and robotic lawn mowers. Now, there's Tertil – the robotic weeder. The weatherproof and solar-powered device moves through your vegetable garden with built-in sensors that sense new little plants and chops off their heads to starve them of energy. You will have to set up some protection for real plants that you want to survive, but hey – that's a small price to pay for reducing your weeding in the vegetable garden. Take a look at a discussion of this gadget in *Garden Culture* magazine, ([gardenculturemagazine.com](http://gardenculturemagazine.com)) & dream!

**Slug It Out** — Now is time to start slug prevention. There are lots of organic suggestions, including to cut sandpaper collars to fit around base of plants. Other suggestions include spray of equal parts vinegar and water on snails/slugs or a yeast and honey mixture instead of beer traps. See [weekendgardener.net](http://weekendgardener.net) for an entertaining discussion of control methods. If all else fails, you can always consider raising chickens!

**In a Pinch** — Pinch back summer-flowering perennials: *Leucanthemum*, *Monarda*, *Phlox*, *Physostegia*, *Tradescantia*, *Nepeta*, and *Veronica* to extend bloom period or to reduce height. Spring-blooming rock garden plants such

as maiden pinks, candytuft, and moss phlox should also be sheared back after bloom. Most of these can be cut down to basal foliage (but don't cut flush to the soil line) resulting in lush new growth.

And then — Start succession plantings of gladiolus bulbs; tie up sweet peas; watch for pine sawflies on Scotch, Mugo and Red pines; harvest mature asparagus and rhubarb; gradually expose houseplants to protected areas outside; finish dividing perennials; check purchased plants for insect hitchhikers and healthy root system; prune lilacs and crabapples after bloom; visit local farmers' market to buy Mothers' Day flowers; mark your calendar for the Great Plant Sale at the Botanical Gardens on May 18–20 and the MG Plant Sale on May 26–27.



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