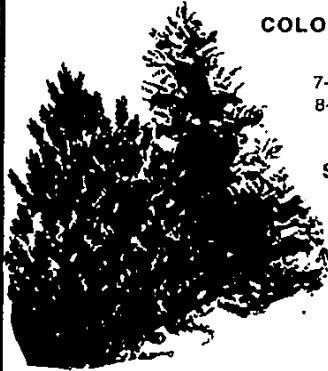


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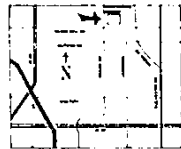


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# Garden Corner Questions sprout, Answers bloom

Michigan State University Extension specialists answer timely questions on vegetable gardening, fruits, landscape ornamentals, houseplants and related topics:

**Q. How long can I harvest rhubarb?**

**A.** An established planting is usually not harvested past July 1. This gives the foliage the rest of the summer to grow and build up the crowns for next year's growth. If you have a lot of plants, you can extend the harvest through the summer by picking a few stalks from all of them.

If you planted rhubarb last year, don't harvest any this year, take a light crop next year and pick a full crop the year after that. Avoid removing more than one-third of the foliage from a plant during any one year.

**Q. There is one area in my yard where I had a lot of mushrooms growing this spring. How can I get rid of them?**

**A.** You can destroy the above-ground parts by raking or mowing, but you have to eliminate the source to get rid of them permanently. They usually grow on buried, decaying wood or other organic debris. You have to get rid of this before you can get rid of the mushrooms.

**Q. I want to fill in a low spot in my back yard. There are several trees in it, and my neighbor tells me I will kill them if I try to fill in around them. Is this true?**

**A.** Six to 12 inches of heavy soil

is enough to suffocate some of a tree's roots. It may eventually kill the tree. Try filling in with a shallow layer of gravel instead. Or build a tree well around each one and fill in among the wells.

**Q. How can I keep the birds out of my strawberries?**

**A.** Suspend bird netting on stakes over the strawberry patch. The alternative is to plant a lot more strawberries than you need so you can afford to share your crop with the birds.

**Q. When do rhubarb stems turn red so we can eat them?**

**A.** Some rhubarb stems never turn red. Some red-stemmed varieties will remain green if they're grown in the shade. Check your variety and the shade conditions in your rhubarb patch.

**Q. How can I keep rabbits out of my vegetable garden?**

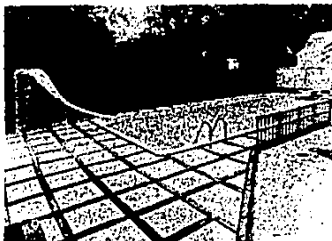
**A.** Chicken wire fencing is your best bet.

**Q. Is there a special kind of wood preservative to use on wooden containers for outdoor plants? I don't want to build a bunch of patio containers and window boxes and have them all rot away in a couple of years.**

**A.** Creosote and other common wood preservatives that contain either tar or pentachlorophenol should not be used around plants. Fumes from these materials are highly toxic to plants. They will burn plant foliage and kill roots. Use instead wood treated with copper maphthenate.

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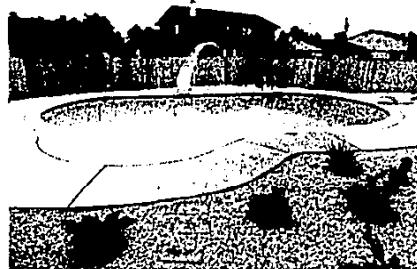
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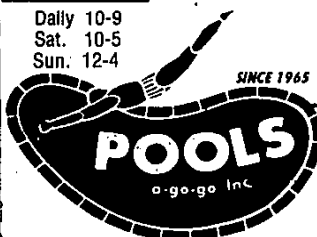


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