

GARDEN SPOT

Our columnist answers your garden questions



MARTY FIGLEY

As we garden we all have questions that come to mind. Perhaps some of the following information will be just what you wanted to know.

What flowers can I plant in a shady area rather than the usual ferns, astilbes or hostas?

Look to wildflowers to fill the void. Jacob's Ladder, *Polemonium reptans*, Wild columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*, Hepatica, *H. Americana*, Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, Blue phlox, *P. divaricata*, and Wild geranium, *G. maculatum*, are a few suggestions. Remember to buy only wildflowers that are nursery propagated.

I like to dig my tulip bulbs up each year and store them until fall. What is a good way to do this?

After the foliage ripens and dies down, dig the bulbs and set them in an airy place to dry. Don't let them get wet. Clean the soil off and dust with sulfur, then put them in nylon bags and hang to store in a cool, dry room that is well ventilated. Label each bag for quick identification.

My peony hasn't bloomed for several years. Any suggestions?

Peonies begin to produce food for storage in the roots for next year's flowers right after they bloom. Don't let weeds crowd the plant and compete for moisture and nutrients, and water them during prolonged dry weather. They need sunlight to bloom, so check the location, especially if they have been doing well and trees have matured enough to make more shade.

Are there any flower seeds that can be sown directly in the ground this month?

Yes, this month is ideal for perennials and biennials for next year's bloom. Delphiniums, lupines, primroses and violas are some. The seeds do need ample moisture through germination and early growth; a light mulch of straw will help retain moisture. When transplanting the seedlings the soil needs to be friable to allow the roots to grow. English daisies, Canterbury bells, Verbascum, Hollyhocks and Foxgloes can also be sown now.

This is the first year I have planted broccoli. Some of them are getting little yellow flowers. What can I do? The yellow flowers are the mature flower heads. The edible part is the immature flower buds. Remove the yellow heads and harvest the smaller side shoots the plant sends up.

My Brussels sprouts are doing well. Any tips to ensure a good harvest?

Remove a few of the lower leaves to allow the sprouts more room to grow. Don't remove too many, because the plants need that foliage for plant growth.

Why do I need to tie the leaves around the heads of my cauliflower?

White cauliflower is caused by being shaded from the sun, so pull the leaves up over the head and tie the. Purple or green types and self-blanching varieties will do fine without this step.

I'm growing sunflowers. Any tips? Don't apply too much fertilizer before flower heads appear. If you want tall sunflowers, pour on the nitrogen. Phosphorus and potassium help with flower size.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1859. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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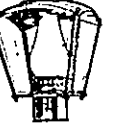
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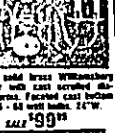
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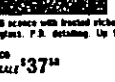
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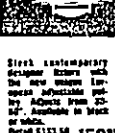
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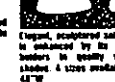
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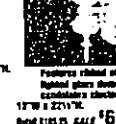
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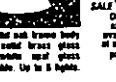
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