

A GUIDE TO GARDENING BY THE MONTH

IDEAS AND REMINDERS

This guide is not intended as a resource, but just a reminder of what to do when. For in depth information on planting and plant care, you should have at least one comprehensive garden book, value your relationship with a local nursery or call the Environmental Horticulturist at the Virginia Cooperative Extension (Albemarle—872-4583, Fluvanna—591-1955)

We live in an area with heavy, clay soil which needs to be improved for best success in growing flowers, trees and shrubs. We can modify the heaviness of the clay by rototilling and working in natural materials such as composted leaves from the fall and other composted organic materials. Because most of our soil is acidic, we need to choose plants that appreciate this quality. If a few of our favorite plants need an alkaline soil, we can sweeten that area with lime each year.

Fluvanna County lies in planting zone 7. This is a general guide for selecting plants according to hardiness. Remember that every yard has at least a few micro climates, which are areas that differ in effective zone due to location. For example, a sunny spot on the south side of your house could be effectively a zone 8 growing area. Conversely, a shady area on the north side could be an effective zone 6.

Consider the successes and failures of the past season. What grew well, what didn't? Were there gaps in the perennial bed in mid summer? Which plants need to be transplanted? Take note of what you do each month and when. Keep lists of plants, germination dates, bloom periods, chores that you are doing now and newspaper, magazine clippings and notes from TV programs or computers.

Treasure your tools! If bad weather forced you indoors before your tools and pots could be cleaned, clean them now by scraping, washing and sharpening them. Make a list of new tools that will make your gardening chores easier. Buy good quality tools. Cheap ones that are used often can end up being more costly than better tools. Plastic carriers with handles that have sections can keep smaller tools well located and are easy to carry. Old carpeting cut in about 8"x20" sections is also a convenient knee saver. To hold your weeds and fall leaves, use large tubs with plastic rope handles. They are more useful than plastic bags that you need to keep opening up.

Click on the links below to find your tips for that month.