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Spring Time is Aphid Time!

Spring time is Aphid time in the Valley. Aphids are small bugs that host on a variety of plants, sucking the life out of them. Normally green, black or red in color, these small insects can be found on the underside of the leaves and on the green stems. Aphids will start from eggs left on stems of plants which hatch in late winter to early spring where they begin their work.

Being proactive and checking plants and trees randomly for signs of Aphids will help to reduce the damage. A systemic pesticide can be applied in



Aphids will attack a plant by attaching to the underside of the leaves sucking the life out of them.

March to help control potential problems. Systemic pesticides are applied to the roots of the plant by drenching the soil with a chemical and water mixture or applying a granular product and watering it in. The plant takes in the chemical where it resides in the leaves for insects to ingest. This process does take a few days or so to become affective and should never be done on food type plants. These products are available at your local

home stores or garden centers and can be in found with a combination of fertilizer or plant food also. Make sure that you always follow the product label. If you find plants with aphids currently on them then you can apply some eco-friendly methods of control. Lady Bugs are natural predators to Aphids.



Lady Bugs pictured here are natural predators and can provide some control for Aphids and other damaging insects in the landscape.

Releasing Lady Bugs on plants in your yard will help control detrimental insects and can be fun for the kids to release. Also, you can try spraying off the bugs with water or apply an insecticidal soap which will normally eliminate existing Aphids. Insecticidal soaps such as Safer Soap can be found at your local home store or garden center. Again, make sure that you follow the label for any pesticide products and check the underside of plant leaves every few days.

Container and Raised Bed Gardening

If you enjoy the way fresh herbs can transform the flavor of your favorite meal, but are reluctant to purchase them at your local grocer due to price, then help has arrived. I once considered using fresh herbs when cooking a luxury reserved for those serious gardeners who spent hours prepping, weeding and cultivating large plots of land from which they could create an elegant meal. Then I found the simple magic that could be produced from a small herb garden grown in a raised bed or large container. Since constructing my first 4' by 6' raised garden bed, I have all but stopped paying \$2.99 for two sprigs of Basil in a plastic box at the grocery store. The best part is that you don't have to be a gourmet chef to use fresh herbs. Think about sprinkling chopped Oregano from your garden on that delivery pizza. Talk about kick'n it up a notch!

These gardens don't need to take up much space to provide all the herbs that you can use. Planning out the site and how you will use it is key to your success. Raised beds can take on many shapes and sizes, ranging from the "half wooden barrel" size which could adorn your patio to a larger wood, stone or block structure that may sit in a corner of your yard. Here a few things to consider to create a productive raised bed:

Location – Where you want to grow your herbs may dictate how large the garden is and what it is constructed of. Look for a sunny area, preferably protected from the afternoon sun, where you will get 6 to 8 hours of sun a day.

Size – Consider how much you want to produce and keep in mind that most herbs can be grown close together. For a raised bed that will be constructed on the ground, don't exceed a 4' width as this makes it easily accessible from either side. Beds should be no less than 8" to 12" deep to allow for good rooting of your plants. Deeper is better if you think you might also want to try tomatoes or pepper plants

Materials – Many materials can be used to build your raised garden which will compliment your landscape. Interlocking block, large stones or landscape timber, all which can be found at your local home



improvement center, can be constructed with minimal effort and few tools to create a functional garden. I suggest staying away from pressure treated lumber products or railroad ties as you don't want the chemicals they are treated with to leach into your planting soil.

Soil – A main purpose of using a raised bed is so that we don't have to work to amend the poor soils that most of us have in our yards. A good planting medium will have a quality blend of composted materials including mulch, manure and soil. Nurseries and home centers will carry premixed products in bags ready to use or you can blend your own.

Irrigation – With our hot summers, how to keep the garden irrigated is an important consideration. Because you will be using well drained soils and the plants may have shallow root zones, this type of gardening usually requires more frequent waterings. If you will commit to hand watering daily, then the hose or the watering can will work just fine. Integrating soaker hoses, drip irrigation or micro sprayers that can be connected to a simple timer on a hose bib works wonders and can save you from the occasional memory lapse when you are too busy to remember to irrigate your plants.

Herbs – What to plant? Your imagination is your limit. Think of what you like to eat and what dry herbs you use now and go from there. You will find that most herbs are very easy to grow whether you have a green thumb or not. When planting, consider the growth habit of the plant. For herbs like Oregano, Rosemary or others with a "trailing" growth habit, keeping them at the edge of the planter and allowing them to spill over the side leaves more room in the middle for the "upright" growers like Sage, Basil or Cilantro. Adding annual flowers into the mix is an attractive option and can be a magnet for beneficial insects.

Frost Damaged Trees

By Gary McCunn, Certified Arborist WE-7255A



The recent record cold temperatures raise some concern regarding trees in the landscape. While several appear to have made it through with no issues there are still some that raise concerns. Trees which may have apparent frost damage should be left alone until the likeliness of freezing temperatures have past. Hopefully you will begin to see new budding take place on the stems which provide a sign of life. Remediation practices should aim to maintain reasonable vigor, promote the compartmentalization of wounds and re-establish a stable, well-spaced branching structure. In addition to pruning, cultural practices such as irrigation, mulching and moderate fertilization can help plants maintain vigor. Trees and shrubs require a certain level of vigor to be able to compartmentalize (wall off) decay resulting from wounds to limit its spread.

When a tree has less than 50 percent of its branches remaining, the best approach may be to remove it. Otherwise, use good pruning practices. Never leave stubs. Cut damaged branches back to laterals or to the trunk but preserve branch collars by making cuts that angle out from the trunk to the under side of the branch. Use the three-cut method for larger branches to prevent bark stripping. 9 times out of 10 the tree will come back with no real signs of damage.



Maintain regular irrigation for the tree and provide supplemental fertilization to help boost tree vigor.



MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Asparagus Fern
- √ Cascalote
- √ Mt. Lemon Marigold
- √ Thevetia (Yellow Oleander)
- √ Baccharis Centennial if not renovated in February
- √ Bougainvillea if not renovated in February
- √ Lantana if not renovated in February
- √ Yellow Bells if not renovated in February
- √ Orange Jubilee in not renovated in February
- √ Verbena if not renovated in February

General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Rye Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 5 – 8 minutes twice per week.
- √ Dormant Bermuda Turf: Water once every few

weeks to one time a month for a few minutes just to keep some moisture in the soil for the stolons.

- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 12 – 14 minutes one time per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 25 – 30 minutes one time per week.

Please remember that these are general and that depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries.

Turf Fertilization for the Rye Grass should be completed once every six to eight weeks on average using fertilizer containing at least 16–20% Nitrogen. Apply following the label and make sure to water in for a few minutes after application.