

It's not been very warm lately, and most of my heat-loving plants are still in the greenhouse, a far cry from a few weeks ago when it looked as if winter had gone for good. In spite of the cooler temperatures – its spring in New England, after all – things are getting planted out.



The Island Garden

By Roger Marshall

Several squash plants were stout last weekend, as were broccoli, cabbage, many, many, annuals and more than 300 dahlia tubers. (That's about a 50 gallon garbage bin full of dahlia tubers.) Unfortunately, I was traveling a lot last fall and could only dig the tubers after the fall frosts had killed them. That meant that I have no idea what the colors are and have to wait and see what comes up. This probably means that large purple dahlias are next to tiny yellow flowered ones, but it will teach me to label the plants before I go off on business trips.

I hope you made it to the Quononoquott Garden Club Plant Sale last weekend. There were a ton of plants on sale and at far better prices than at various garden centers. If you didn't, well, you missed many plant bargains. The money goes to many of the plant projects that you see around town, including the fire station garden and many other projects, so give them your support.

Vegetable garden

Asparagus is sprouting about as hard as it can go and can be harvested heavily (as long as your plants are more than two years old.) You've got about another month of asparagus harvest before you should let the spears develop into ferns to generate food for next

year. Mulch the asparagus bed to keep weeds down. Sorrel, too, can be harvested now. I make sorrel soup base, freeze it, and use it all winter for a quick nutritious lunch with a piece of French bread.

Just about everything can be planted out about now. It would seem that frost season is over and plants (and weeds) are growing fast. Tomatoes should be planted a lot deeper than they are in the pot to help create a greater root system. As the spring warms up make sure your tomatoes are watered consistently or they may develop blossom end rot. Hit garlic, shallots, leeks, and onions with some high nitrogen fertilizer or high quality compost as they start to bulb out. This will also help to keep weeds down.

Soft fruit

If you haven't done it, check your blueberry, red and white currants, raspberries, and other soft fruits and side dress with compost or a good all-around fertilizer. The plants are in flower right now so keeping them fertilized will increase your yields.

In the greenhouse

The unheated greenhouse has a fine crop of lettuce and other greens that have been harvested for the last three weeks. Now they

are starting to bolt so we're having to eat real fast! The peas are more than 3-feet tall, with artichokes about a foot tall. Strawberries are being harvested, as is the rhubarb. Strawberry-rhubarb tart anyone?

In the heated greenhouse, the heat was turned off in mid-April, but the artichokes are near four-feet tall. Most of the fig, olive, and citrus trees have been moved onto the patio for the summer. The last key lime pie got made last week, so that harvest is over. These trees will come in again around late September. Soon it'll be time to do the maintenance on this greenhouse before planting it up for the fall and winter.

Lawns

If you grow your lawn organically, don't worry too much about weeds, dig out dandelions by hand and just fertilize and mow. If you want a pristine green lawn you'll need to hit it with a broad leaf weed killer and fertilizer about now. Then stay off it for at least a week.

Flower gardens

As I say at this time every year, remove the seed pods on daffodils and other bulbs and feed the plants with high quality fertilizer. Do not cut the leaves for at least another six weeks. The leaves make nutrients for next year's flowers. Plant out your annuals for spot color in any bare spots. Spray Deer-Off or other deer sprays to keep the pesky animals from eating your flowers. It doesn't do much for your flower scent, but at least you can enjoy your flowers. Jamestown Hardware has Deer-Off or a similar spray.

Fruit trees

Put Tanglefoot® around tree trunks to prevent ants from bringing aphids up to the growing tips. Spray with fungicide just before

bud break or just after the petals have dropped. Make sure that you have a supply of sticky red balls to trap codling moth and apple maggot flies. Hang them out now.

Use local firewood to prevent insect infestations

As campers and other vacationers prepare for their upcoming holidays, the state's Department of Environmental Management, and colleagues from throughout New England, are urging them to refrain from transporting firewood to and from other areas, and to use, instead, only local firewood at their campsites and summer cottages.

At a regional firewood forum held this spring, environmental officials from throughout New England met with U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture officials to discuss the increasing danger from invasive species and the role that movement of firewood plays in forest devastation, and urge the public to take precautions.

Tree-eating, non-native, insects can be transported in firewood, with the potential to cause damage costing millions of dollars in clean-up, eradication, and replanting efforts. In fact, the issue of invasive species is one of the forest service's top four threats. The financial impact from invasive species infestations in the United States has been estimated at \$138 billion per year in total economic damages and associated control costs.

There are many species of insects and diseases that can be spread through the movement of firewood, including emerald ash borer, Asian longhorn beetle, and Sirex woodwasps, none of which are currently found in Rhode Island. Emerald ash borer, first detected in North America near Detroit in 2002, has since killed more than 25 million ash trees in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. More than 75 percent of emerald ash borer infestation sites with known origins were the result of firewood movement.

Catherine Sparks, Chief of DEM's Division of Forest Environment says, "Rhode Islanders should be aware that they can carry local infestations of gypsy moth eggs and hemlock woolly adelgid in their own firewood, and should not transport it elsewhere. When potentially infested firewood is moved, any pests that emerge can seriously threaten the trees in the new community.

"You can't tell just by looking at it whether or not a log is infested," Sparks adds. "Insects and diseases can be in or underneath the bark of infested logs, as well as on it."

Although many people wouldn't think to bring firewood from home to their summer destination, a 2006 survey of New Hampshire campers indicated that about half came from out-of-state, and more than 40 percent hauled their firewood from home.

"We are hoping that as more and more people get the message, they will willingly leave firewood at home, and buy it where they plan to burn it," says Sparks.

Dear Patrick,

It was a pleasure working with you this spring. Your crew did a beautiful job painting our trim and staining our cedar shingles. All the workmen were professional, courteous, and conscientious. Your foreman was always available and approachable and I liked the fact that you came by each day to assess the crew's work and keep me up to date on the progress.

In addition to being knowledgeable about the work, your organizational skills are truly amazing. The job was done quickly and efficiently and minor problems were addressed skillfully by an appropriate craftsman. We were left with a quality product and I'm happy to recommend you to anyone who needs this type of work done!

Sincerely,

 Priscilla Szneke

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To Whom It May Concern:

Patrick Baker is a master painter with an extensive knowledge about construction.

Recently, he painted Eveherdee, my home in Newport, an 1891 Sanford White Victorian. As one knows, Victorian homes are noted for a multitude of colors and Eveherdee sports six wonderful mixtures...beautiful to look at, hard to paint.

Patrick and his wonderful crew took on the challenge of painting a three-story house with impossibly high eaves and the added task of material matching all along the way. The house turned out magnificently, mainly due to the attention to paint detail on the spindles, grooves and trimlines associated with a Victorian.

Patrick is first rate, always updating information about any problems and always on schedule. I highly recommend him for any job.

Sincerely,

 Vin Di Bona
 Executive Producer
 America's Funniest Home Videos