



Betty's Bloomers Nursery

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Are You Ready to Plant?

Who can resist going to the nurseries and garden centers this time of year? Everything is sprouting & blooming in our neighborhood & even in our own back yard. Finding just the right color Azalea or Petunia is fun, but maybe we forget the most important step: Keeping our plants healthy so we have not wasted our time or money. Discussing fertilizer and plant requirements may not be as much fun as plant shopping, but it is important.

What's in Season?

Before you buy that beautiful new plant that you have never grown before, do a little homework. Make sure it has the same light requirements as where you want to plant it. If you do not know what is required, ask a reputable nursery person or read labels. Remember these labels are written for any climate, North or South. For example, an impatiens may be labeled for partial sun or shade but if it is planted in the full Southeast Texas sun it will not be happy. Also, know how large your new plant will be at maturity. A large shrub should not be forced to be contained into a small space. The new plant will not be happy, nor will whoever is having to prune it on a regular basis. On the other hand, a dwarf shrub should not be expected

to fill a large area fast. We won't even talk about trying to control ground covers in a small space.

To Do List:

Improving your soil is probably the most important thing you can do to make gardening easier in the long run. Having good soil saves on fertilizer, water and not to mention replacing those plants that did not survive due to droughts, floods or neglect. Most soil in Southeast Texas is either heavy black gumbo clay or sandy soil. Tilling in organic matter can improve either heavy clay soil by loosening it to help drainage or sandy soil by adding nutrients and helping to retain moisture.

You should know the "pH" of your soil. This term refers to the acidity or alkalinity of a solution. It ranges from 0 (extremely acid) to 14 (extremely alkaline) Gardeners must be concerned with the acidity or alkalinity of their soil because pH affects the way plants take in nutrients and fertilizers. Have your soil analyzed through the County Agriculture Extension Office to find out the nutrient content and the pH. Generally the soil in our area tends to be more acidic than most plants prefer. To make your soil more neutral, add ground limestone. Adding 50 lbs. of lime to 1,000 sq.ft. will increase the pH by 1 point. Adding oak or other hardwood leaves will also make your soil less acidic than using pine straw or pine mulch.

Something Extra

Fertilizer is the "vitamin pill" of the soil, the source of extra pep for your plants. Few soils are rich enough to provide all the needed nutrients. We gardeners, then must supplement the soil. Fertilizers come in many forms. Some are liquid or granular. Some are organic, while others are man made. You must read labels carefully to choose the best food for your plants. Every fertilizer sold must list its contents on its label. The analysis will tell the nutritional content of the product. Most fertilizers include Nitrogen (promotes leaf growth), Phosphorus (promotes roots, flowers, & fruit) & Potassium (important for general hardiness). They may also include trace elements such as iron, zinc, herbicides, insecticides, or fungicides. Whether you use organic or inorganic (commercial) fertilizer is up to you. Generally, organic fertilizers help to improve soil, much like compost & are more long term nutrient released. Inorganic fertilizers are faster acting and usually less expensive.

Make your own "free" fertilizer by composting organic matter such as grass clippings, leaves, and kitchen wastes like eggshell, coffee grounds & vegetables (no animal products)

Contact us

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