

APRIL GROWING- EARLY SEASON

The growing season is upon us-time to start growing! As the season begins, we will get busier and busier. Here are some things to do either in or for the garden.

- Finish cleaning out your garden and trimming perennials if you haven't already. Get your beds ready-add amendments like compost, old manures and lightly turn the soil and rake.

- Check your drip systems and timers to make sure they are in good working order BUT do not keep them attached yet because we still can get freezing nights. You'll have to hand water for now. If you don't have a drip system, look into doing one. I use the store, Firebird, located here in Santa Fe to get parts and their expertise on the subjects. It's not hard to do and really saves water and your time.

- Put CORN GLUTEN down in your veggie garden paths. It is a PRE-EMERGENT for controlling weed seeds and is ORGANIC. I ordered it from The Feed Bin here in Santa Fe a couple of years ago. BUT if your weeds are up already, it acts as a fertilizer. (It is very high in nitrogen and that is why it burns the seedlings but will also feed weeds that get established-timing is everything). Don't put in veggie beds where you will be planting any seeds as it will burn any seeds. You can also use a stirrup hoe to cut off weeds on the ground. This will get rid of 90-% of weeds. The other 10% of weeds are perennials which are harder to get rid of.

- Start adding to your traditional compost pile again. Heat it up. Turn it over. Use HOT MANURE to heat it up or powdered blood meal which is high in nitrogen (12%). I don't compost in winter because it is too hard for me to keep hot but it is a good time to start one now.

- I plant tomato seeds the first week of April. That is if you are going to try to grow your own tomatoes this year. That means they will be 6 weeks old by May 15 which is the last freeze date. You can plant them anytime between 4-6 weeks old in wall of waters (WOW). WOWs protects the plants from our cold nites. The nice thing about growing your own is that you can try a lot of different varieties of tomatoes that you can't get in the nurseries BUT you'll have to grow them on a heat mat set at about 75°F and under lights inside a protected place (like your home). If you don't want to try growing tomatoes this year, then you can buy tomato plants and transplant them later.

- Now you can plant peas, carrots, shallots, beets, lettuces, spinach, all greens, onions, and garlic OUTSIDE by seed or transplant. I will still use some row cover to protect them on our cold nights.

-Asparagus and Rhubarb are coming up! Start watering. You can cover with row cover to protect them from cold freezing nights and water them now too.

- Plant potatoes in April- Get potato seeds (they are little potatoes) from the local

nurseries and chit them. Chitting potatoes is growing out those little eyes. Put them in indirect light. I use egg cartons to hold them so the eyes don't break off. After they grow eyes, plant them. Chitting potatoes will let you harvest them 2-3 weeks earlier when harvesting in late summer. Dig a trench 10 inches deep and cover the potato seeds with about 3-4 inches of soil and as they grow cover them (leaves and all) till the trench is filled. Then keep piling on the dirt.

- Clean out strawberry beds- Strawberries are perennials Rake out old leaves and take out any old crowns. Sprinkle yum-yum mix, rock phosphate and greensand over bed and water in heavily as they probably haven't had much moisture. Then start watering regularly about 1x a week. Put row cover over it as the little leaves start coming back when it is cold at nite.

- Garlic that we planted last fall is now coming up nicely. I have straw on my beds to help keep water from evaporating and be sure to water every week right now.

- Speaking of ROW COVER, now is the time to get some from our local nurseries. MOST of them carry it (but not Home Depot or Lowes-no big box stores). The nurseries usually sell out. I would get some heavy weight for now and a lighter weight for summer or get the lighter weight and double it up for now. You can also order it online. Just google: row cover.