



June Tips

PERENNIALS, ANNUALS AND BULBS

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- For fragrance in the garden, use perennials such as Sweet Woodruff (*Asperula odorata*, Zones 4-8), Lily-of-the-Valley (*Convallaria majalis*, Zones 2-7), and Lemon Lily (*Hemerocallis liliosphodelus*, Zones 5-9).
- The Virginia Native Plant Society has named New York Ironweed (*Veronia novaboracensis*) as the 1995 Virginia Wildflower of the Year. This mid-summer to fall bloomer has violet-colored flowers and grows best in moist, acid soil, reaching a maximum height of 9 feet. In dry soil, it will reach a height of 3 feet. It is hardy in all Virginia.
- How do you choose a good container-grown plant? Gently shake the plant from its container. Root systems should be well developed, and the root and soil mass should retain its shape when removed from the container. Avoid plants with roots circling around the pot or coming out of the drain holes.
- When choosing bedding plants, look for plants that are well-proportioned with sturdy stems. Leaves should have a rich, green color. Check for pests if foliage appears mottled or the edges of the leaves are curled. Try to buy packs with large, deep cells spaced far apart which encourages a larger root system.
- Try the new dwarf form of butterfly bush. They are about half the size, and their fragrant mid-summer flowers are attractive to butterflies. Petite Indigo TM Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii nanhoensis* 'Mongo') has dark, lilac blue flower spikes, and Petite Plum TM Butterfly Bush (*B. davidii nanhoensis* 'Monum') has reddish-purple flowers with an orange eye in each floret. The ultimate size of both cultivars is about 6 feet.
- Hart's tongue, southern maidenhair, and walking fern need alkaline soil. Remember to put compost or leaf mold around outdoor ferns.
- When your early, annual flowers are spent, replace them with summer annuals, such as nicotiana, portulaca, zinnia, impatiens, or celosia. Before planting, rework and enrich the soil with compost.
- Gloxinia flowers will last longer if plants are moved to a cool, shaded spot once the blossoms have fully opened.
- Petunias and marigolds are more useful as cut flowers than most folks appreciate. The flowers will last for several days and are very attractive in mixed bouquets.
- When going on vacation, group plants in containers together near a water source and out of the afternoon

sun. Grouping them will help plants conserve water, and shade will help reduce the need for water. If plants are located together near a hose, the neighbor who comes to water won't overlook any.

- Leach container soils occasionally to remove any mineral salts accumulated from fertilizer and hard water. Brown leaf edges and crusting on the sides of clay pots are two indicators of a salt problem. To leach large containers, water until the soil is soaked, then allow water to run slowly from your hose into the pot for about 20 minutes. For small pots, water each container until it drains freely from the bottom holes. Wait a few minutes, then repeat.
- Bronze-leaved varieties of begonia do particularly well in full sun. Keep the foliage dry and provide good air circulation around the plants.
- Grow perfect, individual flowers for shows by bagging them with a piece of spun-bonded, polyester, row cover material. Cut a square large enough to cover the desired flower, and gather the edges with strong thread so the material is snug against the stem. Insects will be unable to get to the prized bud.
- For hanging baskets in cool, shady locations, use trailing tuberous begonias, ferns, impatiens or fibrous rooted begonias in combination with trailing plants, such as English ivy.
- Plant tropical water lilies early in summer.
- Remove old flower heads from bedding plants to prolong the period of bloom.
- Disbud chrysanthemum flowers to secure large, beautiful blooms on straight, strong stems. To disbud, remove the small, side buds that form in the angles of the leaves along the stems. This allows all food reserves to be used for one large flower rather than many smaller ones.
- Plant annual flowers in tubs or large crocks for the porch or terrace. Be sure there are holes in the container bottom to provide good drainage.
- Divide spring and early summer flowering perennials after the blooms fade. Instead of severing the clump in half, try jiggling the roots apart with two sharp, spading forks. This takes more time, but damages fewer roots than cutting the clump apart.
- Remove foliage from spring bulbs after it turns yellow and begins to dry. Set out bedding plants to cover the bare spots using care not to damage bulbs.
- When selecting a window box, it is best to choose a wooden box. Metal ones are more likely to overheat if sitting in the hot, summer sun. Also, wooden boxes allow for drainage, whereas metal or plastic ones often do not. The color of the box should also be considered -- dark ones get warmer than light-colored boxes.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dorn, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines, and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription