



Gardening Tips

Starting your own transplants from seeds can be a lot of fun and is probably much easier than you might imagine. In many situations, one or two propagation flats for growing transplants are enough to stock the vegetable garden with nearly all the vegetables a small family will need. All the "stuff" you need to get started may be found at your local garden center.



There are many types of containers that can be used to start seeds. Egg cartons, plastic food containers, Styrofoam cups, etc. My favorite is a small, rectangular tray that comes complete with a plastic lid and compressed soil pellets. This package sells for less than seven dollars. The tray holds the pellets that substitute for loose soil. The clear plastic lid is used to maintain a moist environment, retain heat and protect young seedlings from the wind. The tray is designed so that each soil pellet has its own compartment to insure adequate spacing. This unit is also very portable so that it can be brought inside if freezing weather threatens.



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Preventing Insects on Your Houseplants	2
Garden Calendar	3
Read the Label	4
Continued: Read the Label	5
Landscape Symposium	6
Forestry Association Meeting	7
Beekeeping Meetings	8
Private Applicator Training	

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Changing the Color of Hydrangeas

The Hydrangea (or Hortensia) genus consists of about 70 plus species. Of these species, only about 5 are used extensively in the landscape. Hydrangeas are native to southern and eastern Asia. They are the most diverse species specifically in China and Japan. They are also found in North and South America. Hydrangeas are great plants for the garden whose many benefits have been well recognized by gardeners over the centuries. They provide floral and occasionally foliar interest beginning in late spring or early summer that often persists well into autumn.

Hydrangeas are also a very easy group of plants to grow, providing a great degree of satisfaction with minimal effort. The one requirement shared among the various species is the need for consistent moisture throughout the growing season and the need for water. This is reflected in the name, hydrangea, which can be translated from Greek to water (hydr) vessel (angeion) but, the name refers to the spherical shape of the open flower head.

Hydrangeas are a favorite among many Southerners. Their colorful blooms are a classic staple in many landscapes. They typically come in a variety of colors, including blue, purple, white, and pink. But did you know you can change the color of certain hydrangeas? With a little work and a lot of patience, you can change the color of bigleaf and mountain hydrangeas by adjusting the soil pH. To be clear, although we reference pH when discussing hydrangea flower color, it's really the amount of aluminum that can be accessed by the plant from the soil that helps determine flower color. This accessibility of aluminum is the result of pH and amount of phosphorus. In other words, a lower pH allows aluminum to be soluble and absorbed by plants (unless phosphorus is high), and the flowers tend to be blue.

To change the flower color, first, find out the pH levels in the soil where your hydrangeas currently grow. You can do this by submitting a soil sample to your local Extension office for testing. The results will include your soil pH level, which determines the color of the blooms. Then, increase or decrease the soil pH to get the desired color. Use lime to increase soil pH or use sulfur to decrease soil pH. Blue hydrangeas need a pH between 5 and 5.5, while soil with a pH of 6 to 6.5 produces pink flowers. Purple can sometimes be achieved with a pH of 5.5 to 6. Just keep in mind, it won't work with white flowers.

The most effective way to change the soil pH and the color of the hydrangeas is to apply a liquid soil drench to the base of the plant once a month for three months. Ideally, this should happen in spring to early summer. To make pink flowers turn blue (lower the pH), dissolve 1 tablespoon of aluminum sulfate to a gallon of water and apply. To make blue flowers turn pink (raise the pH), dissolve 1 tablespoon of lime to a gallon of water and apply. For more information on hydrangeas, check out Extension publication 2574, *Hydrangeas for Mississippi Gardens*.



Pink flowers on hydrangeas are the result of a pH of 6 – 6.5.



Blue flowers on hydrangeas are the result of a pH of 5 – 5.5.

Garden Calendar: March

Planting

- Plant new roses.
- Broad-leaved Evergreens such as Magnolia and Holly can be set out at this time.
- Plant cold weather annuals: Sweet William, English Daisies, Pansies, and Calendulas.
- Divide Mondo Grass and Liriope. Divide Cannas, Chrysanthemums, Coreopsis, Phlox, and Obedient Plant.
- Start seeds for Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, and Eggplant. Set out Thyme, Lemon Balm, Oregano, Chives, Sage, and Winter Savory.
- Sow seeds of Johnny Jump-ups, Sweet Peas, Larkspur, Forget-me-nots, and Baby Blue Eyes.
- Flowering shrubs may be moved at this time. Larger shrubs should be moved with a ball of dirt and smaller shrubs may be moved bare-rooted.
- This is the best month to move Crape myrtles.
- Lawns may be sodded at this time. Plant Gladiolus throughout this month for continuous bloom. Plant Hostas.
- Caladiums can be started in outdoor containers as soon as weather warms.



Fertilizing

- Fertilize all the garden except acid-loving plants.
- Topdress Camellias with azalea-camellia fertilizer.
- Lime Peonies, Clematis, and Boxwoods.



Pest Control

- Spray new rose leaves for black spot weekly.

Pruning

- Prune roses at this time. Remove dead and weak canes. Properly dispose of clippings.
- Prune Crape Myrtles and Altheas.
- Prune evergreens for shape and size as early in the month as possible.
- Cut English Ivy back very hard. It will come back very nicely in the spring.
- Trim Mondo Grass and Liriope with lawn mower set on highest setting (6 inches). Dispose of trimmings.

Mulch

- Replenish mulch around Azaleas and Camellias.

Miscellaneous

- Dispose of fallen Camellia blossoms to prevent blight.
- Rake up seed hulls from under bird feeders. They will smother new growth.
- Remove dead flowers from Tulips and Daffodils. Do not cut foliage before it turns yellow and dies.



In Bloom

Bluebells, Chionodoxa, Daffodil, Hyacinth, early Iris, Pansies, Violet, Carolina Jasmine, Azaleas, Camellias, Forsythia, Pearl Bush, Photinia, Flowering Quince, Spirea, flowering fruit trees (Crabapple, Cherry, Pear, and Peach), Oriental Magnolia, and Redbud.



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Read the Label!

You may have noticed by now that each time we suggest using a pesticide product in this publication we often include “Read the Label”. The pesticide label is your best guide to using pesticides safely and effectively. The directions on the label are there primarily to help you achieve maximum benefits of the product you’re using which is to control the problem pest at minimum risk. Both depend on following label directions and correctly using the pesticide.

There are two names on a product we as homeowners generally look at when selecting a pesticide. The Brand name and/or the Active Ingredient. The brand name or trade name is what we more commonly use to identify a product. The active ingredient is the chemical that controls the pest. Many brands can have the same active ingredient. The active ingredient Glyphosate, for example, can be found in Roundup, Cornerstone, Rodeo, Touchdown, and Hi Yield Killzall among many others. I tend to use the active ingredient as identification more-so than the brand or trade name due to this fact.

I often suggest that you read the label before purchasing a pesticide. Then you should follow the label each time you mix and use the pesticide and follow the label when storing or disposing of the pesticide. After all, the use of any pesticide in any way that does not comply with label directions and precautions is illegal. By not following the label on a product it may be ineffective on the pests and/or pose risks to users or the environment.

When reviewing a label before purchasing, the first two things I look for is, 1.) Will it control the pest I need to control, and 2.) Is it ok for me to use on or around the plant material where I need to control the pest? For example, if I need to control lawn burweed in Centipede I’m going to look for those two things on the label. If one of those things isn’t listed on the label, I’ll choose another product. Likewise, if I need to control leaf-footed bugs on tomatoes, I’m going to look for those things on the label.

Once you’ve chosen the correct product, be sure to read the Precautions and Restrictions. These lists are some of the most important but over-looked statements on a label and sometimes begin with DO NOT. For example, MSM Turf containing the active ingredient Metsulfuron Methyl can be used on St. Augustine, Bermudagrass, Zoysia, and Centipede. The label reads, “Do not apply MSM Turf under stress from drought, insects, disease, cold temperatures, or poor fertility as injury may result”. This is important information. Pay close attention to Environmental Hazards or Precautions as well.

Pay close attention to timing and rates of application. Many labels will provide different rates of application for various circumstances. For insecticides, these variations may be for one insect species verses another. For example, Talstar PL containing the active ingredient Bifenthrin is an insecticide that treats many lawn insects. The application rate for treating sod webworms is 50 lbs per acre but, the rate for treating mole crickets is 100-200 lbs per acre. Pay close attention to Comments if applicable. On this product label, there are recommendations for treating adult and nymph mole crickets separately which also includes timing of treatment. For lawn herbicides, rates can change from grass type to location to soil type. **Continued on page 5**



The label on this very common herbicide requires you to wear long-sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes plus socks, and rubber gloves when mixing and applying.



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Read the Label!

The MSM Turf example on the previous page provides a lower rate for Centipede than the other three. Hi Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed & Grass Stopper provides different rates for the Northern vs Southern regions of the U.S. as well as length of control. Follow recommended rates, more is never better.

Also included on the label are a list of Signal Words. These words indicate the acute toxicity of the product to humans, based on one or more potential routes of exposure.

CAUTION — Pesticides that are the least harmful to you

WARNING — More toxic than those with a Caution label

DANGER — Very poisonous or irritating and should be used with extreme care because they can severely burn your skin and eyes. Most pesticides with DANGER signal word are restricted-use pesticides and are not available to the general public. You'll find on many labels a recommendation for Personal Protective Equipment. This is not a suggestion and may read, "Applicators and other handlers must wear:" followed by the list of PPE. Most homeowner-use products will require a minimum of Long-sleeved shirt and long pants, Chemical resistant gloves, Shoes plus socks. Remember, this is for YOUR protection! Be familiar with First Aid Instructions if needed. Accidents do happen.

Pesticide product labels provide critical information about how to safely and legally handle and use pesticide products. Unlike most other types of product labels, pesticide labels are legally enforceable, and all of them carry the statement: "It is a violation of Federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labeling." In other words, the label is the law.



This product label contains an Environmental Hazard: This product is toxic to fish and aquatic organisms and may contaminate water through runoff. Do not apply directly to water.

Lawn Management Presentation

March 28th 1 PM – 3 PM, Tim Ray, Harrison County Extension, will host a Lawn Management Presentation via Zoom. He will discuss the most important aspects of proper lawn management including, mowing, fertilization, watering, and pest control.

Join Zoom Presentation

<https://msstateextension.zoom.us/j/99113909351>

Meeting ID: 991 1390 9351



28th

Landscape Symposium

March 25, 2023

The Venue at 7L Farms
853 Oil Well Road
Wiggins MS 39577

Program 8:30AM – 3:00PM

Topics Include:
Common Mississippi Butterfly Host Plants
Cold Damage
Veggies
Salad Tables

Pre-Registration is required - \$10.00. Deadline is March 21, 2023.
(Lunch included)

There will be a Vegetable and Plant Sale and a Raffle

Make checks payable to: Stone County Master Gardener and mail to: Stone County Master Gardeners, 214 N. Critz Street, Suite A, Wiggins, MS 39577

For more information call (601) 928-5286

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Stone County Master Gardeners



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Stone-Pearl River County Forestry Association Meeting

The Stone-Pearl River County Forestry Association will meet at Bill's Catfish & Steaks in Wiggins on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Guest speakers for the meeting will be:

- Dr. Wes Burger, Dean, College of Forest Resources and Director, Forest and Wildlife Research Center.
- Butch Bailey, Extension Associate III, Title III Forestry Program, MSU Department of Forestry.

Anyone interested in forestry as a business or in conservation of forest lands is welcome to attend. We would like to encourage everyone to come to the meeting.

You Must RSVP to the Stone County Extension Office (601) 928-5286 by Monday, March 6, 2023, if you plan to attend the meeting so that we can get a head count for the food.



Events

PEARL RIVER COUNTY BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

Date: Saturday, March 4, 2023

Location: MSU Pearl River County

Extension Service Office

204 Julia Street

Poplarville, MS 394 70

Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for a time of friendship and fellowship. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m.

Our guest speaker will be Mr. Joey Rawls of Pine, Louisiana. Mr. Rawls is past President of the Franklinton Louisiana Club.

He will be presenting a discussion on Working & Managing Long Langstroth Hives.

This will not only be a talk, but also possibility a ""Show and Tell"".

Mark your calendars and plan on attending!

Call 601-403-2280 to RSVP for meeting.

PINE BELT BEEKEEPERS ASSOC. PRESENTS

BEEGINNER
Bee
KEEPER
SERIES

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

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MONDAYS - FEB.27-MARCH 20 - 6:30 PM
216 SHELBY STREET - PURVIS MS 39475 - (601) 794-3910
FIELD DAY ON SATURDAY, MARCH 18TH 11 AM
1262 Browns Bridge Rd., Hattiesburg, MS 39401

GETTING STARTED - EQUIPMENT - HIVE INSPECTIONS - MORE

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status. Individuals who require special accommodations to participate should contact the Extension Office to make their request known prior to the program.

Online Private Applicator Certification Program

A private applicator is a certified applicator who uses or supervises the use of restricted-use pesticides to produce an agricultural commodity on his or her own land, leased land, or rented land or on the lands of his or her employer. Private applicators must be at least 18 years old.

In response to limited face-to-face training during the COVID-19 situation, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Plant Industry has approved an online private applicator certification program developed by the MSU Extension Service. Persons needing to obtain or renew their private applicator certification can complete the online training (two video training modules and a competency exam) by using the following link: <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/online-private-applicator-certification-program>. The fee for training and testing is \$20, payable online by credit card, debit card, or eCheck.

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY...
EXTENSION

Private Applicator
TRAINING AND TESTING ONLINE

Watch the training modules, pass the exam, and receive your private applicator certification from MDAC Bureau of Plant Industry.

\$20 COST

Visit <http://msuext.ms/agmes>
or contact your local MSU Extension office for info on how to register.