

A Better Slug Trap

With all the moisture this year, slugs have been a major nuisance. When people have slugs they typically put out caps of beer which need to be replaced on a regular basis due to evaporation. Water from rain or irrigation will also dilute the beer where it becomes ineffective. The diagram below might be a better option.



1. Empty 3/4 of beer from bottle or can.
2. Partially bury bottle so opening is at soil level.

Note: It's important to place the can/bottle at just the right position in the ground for this to be effective. If a lot of slugs are present and multiple bottles are needed it's helpful to take a nap between step 1 and 2.



A picture of a Magnolia flower taken this spring in the nursery.

Please send newsletter requests, questions and topics to info@designingeden.com. To receive this newsletter send one box of milk chocolate (Nuts and caramels only, no creams) with your contact information to the address listed above.

Garden Calendar

April:

Now is the time to divide ornamental grasses.

Continue spring cleanup of lawn and gardens.

Set out plant supports for top heavy perennials to allow plants to grow through them.

Apply pre-emergent weed control to plant beds if you've had past weed problems.

Apply crabgrass control to lawns if you had a problem last year. Apply first application when forsythia are in bloom. Ultimately the best defense against weeds is a thick, healthy lawn. Look into slice seeding or core aerating in August.

May:

Plant annuals after the last expected frost, usually the last week of May. If you plant annuals any earlier, be sure to have sheets or burlap handy to protect plants from frost.

Prune spring flowering shrubs right after flowering before next years flower buds form.

June:

Perennials that are too tall for their space or tend to flop over mid season can be cut back to 6". Doing this will decrease the overall size of the plant and push back bloom time by 2-3 weeks.

Deadhead spent flowers to promote reblooming.



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Spring 2012



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Greetings from Richard



Hello, Happy Spring!

As I write this, I sit here in my truck, under-dressed on a cold and blustery Monday morning, after a week of late winter work with 70 degree temperatures. It's hard for my body to adjust to the weather when the temperature changes are so drastic from day to day. Despite today's weather, things have been great and the gardening season is in full swing, earlier than usual this year. There aren't many years when we start gardening full time at the beginning of March.

I'm excited to say that a home, of one of our clients, was featured in East Coast Home Magazine. The house was designed by Wes Wyrick and built by Old Mill Builders, both from Kent. There was a 2 page shot of the front façade and landscape before the article took the reader inside the house. The pictures, to the right, are pictures that I took last year of the house. To see the article go to www.echomeanddesign.com, go to the link for past issues. The article is on page 52 of the Jan/Feb. issue.

As a reminder, it has been extremely dry without a lot of precipitation through the winter. Your plants are thirsty and will thank you, if you reward them with a drink.

Richard Schipul

The Effects of a Warm Winter

Due to the unusually warm winter, many clients and friends have asked what effects this past winter will have on their plants and gardens. Below, is my prediction for the upcoming gardening season.

You would think a warm winter would be good for plants? Just as extremely cold weather can wreak havoc on plants, so can an abnormally warm winter. Especially during a winter with little precipitation. Plants of all types were thoroughly confused this winter. From the Cherry tree I saw blossoming in February to the daffodils flowering at a time when they are usually in their mid winter slumber.

The good news is nothing serious should have occurred to affect the long term health of your plants. The bad news is that spring flower displays shouldn't be as showy as they typically are.

Some plants are well ahead of schedule while others are still running on their normal schedule despite the weather. It's hard to imagine, but there have been studies on plants that show some species have their own internal calendars. We can have a warm winter but if the day isn't the right length, a plant will remain dormant a little later than if the day is the right length, no matter what the temperature. Some plants have the capability to track weather and will be slow to break dormancy unless the winter season's cold requirement has been met. A plant's calendar will monitor weather and regulate dormancy whether the winter temperature is 5 degrees or 65 degrees. Because of this, holding off on any spring pruning until a plant is fully leafed out might be a good idea. Some plants might break dormancy a little later while other plants might be well ahead of schedule. Despite the weather, branches that might look dead may still be dormant. Check for life by cutting off a small branch or rub off some bark. If green tissue exists, the tree is fine. Spring flowering shrubs bloom on last year's growth. Those flower buds are subject to all the crazy weather New England

experiences. During winters when we get warm weather, a plant's buds can swell and start to open. This premature growth is fine if we continue to receive moderate temperatures. Trouble sets in when the temperature dips back to sub freezing temperatures. Once that occurs, flower buds are damaged and come spring, will not flower. A lot of spring flower buds in both trees and shrubs began to swell and were then damaged by the false sense of spring followed by a couple of days of more normal February and March cold.

Warm winter days followed by nights below freezing can also wreak havoc on thin barked trees. On warm winter days sap begins to flow. As night time temperatures drop below freezing the sap freezes, then expands to the point where it can split bark, causing what is called Frost Crack. There is nothing that can be done once the split occurs besides giving the tree time to heal. Frost Crack isn't detrimental to tree health but it does diminish the look of the tree and provides an easy access point for insects and diseases.

Also, a concern from this past winter, beyond the warm temperatures, was the lack of precipitation. Because of this, you might notice some damage from winter dessication on broadleaf evergreens. Dessication occurs when broadleaf evergreens lose water through evotranspiration quicker than it can be replaced. If you notice some off color or dead branches, you'll need to prune and fertilize the plant to aid recover. Also, think about spraying your broadleaf evergreens with an antitranspirant every winter to prevent damage.

One good thing that will come out of this crazy weather is the late fall and mild winter encouraged root growth in all plants including turf. A healthy root system helps fend off insects, diseases and drought stress. Happy gardening!

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