



Digger Dan's Monthly Garden Tips

March 2010

The Veggie Garden

- Powdery Mildew on leaves is the result of high temperatures and intermittent rain, often prevalent when vegetables such as courgettes are watered in the evenings. Mix 1 cup of milk into 1 litre of water and spray over plants.
- Bacterial leaf spots appearing on veggies such as broccoli and tomatoes could well be the result of overhead watering in this heat. Don't rush home and put the sprinkler on – buy a soak hose and get the water to the roots where the plants really need it.
- Cut back tired herbs such as thyme, rosemary and mint and they'll put on fresh growth. Don't over water basil – it likes the dry heat and will keep growing 'til May.
- A good near natural deterrent and caterpillar control is *Yates' Success* – it'll save your crops from many of the latest invaders.
- Courgettes (zucchini) haven't been pollinating in areas of high humidity – the female flowers have small unformed courgettes at the end of them, so find a male flower and push some of the pollen into the female flowers.
- An autumn crop of lettuces, parsley and coriander will do well now, liquid feed (with *Living Earth Liquid Compost*) at planting and water regularly so they do not 'bolt'.
- Harvest garlic and onions – bumper red onion crops can be sliced, tossed over a minimum heat in the fry pan to caramelize into Onion Marmalade that keeps in the fridge for ages. Squeeze bulbs of roasted garlic into good store-bought mayo to convert to a very passable aioli.

The Rest of the Garden

- Earwig invasion: screwed up newspaper at the base of plants or *Yates' Pyrethrum* sprayed at dusk (so the foliage is still damp at night) will deal with these night owls. Discard newspaper in the morning – it should have a colony of earwigs inside!
- Hydrophobic soils – that's soil or mix that will not re-wet and the water just runs off it. If a soil or potting mix has dried out during long rain-free weather, it can get to the point where it won't absorb water. Break it up, keep adding water until it begins to look wetter, then dig or fork through *Living Earth* compost to increase its water retention capacity. If it's an ongoing problem in your garden bed or planter box, add some *Aquaturf Max G* wetting agent (or similar) to the mix.
- Cleaning up versus balancing the eco-system: in the new movement to organic gardening it's easy to say the weeds are a host for beneficial insects! However that's a bit like saying

“I’m not doing the dishes because I’m saving water.” Weeds are the undesirables you don’t like looking at in your garden; they steal water from your chosen plants and they’re busy seeding themselves now for next season. And if you look closely they’re probably harbouring disease on their foliage – this spreads to your other plants too. Do the ‘outdoor housework’ and give them the boot.

- Feeding – Now’s good. As soon as the soil gets wetter, the plants will want to grow. Roses, all shrubs and perennials, citrus trees and our NZ plants can use extra nutrients now. *Living Earth* Liquid Compost is available at all our yards and is a good top-up for your garden. (NZ plants and other phosphorus sensitive shrubs should be topped up with compost or use a specially formulated fertiliser).
- Buy new season’s bulbs, but store in a cool place (hyacinths, tulips and daffs in the ‘fridge) and plant in April. Order on-line at www.nzbulbs.co.nz.

The Lawn

- With autumn around the corner and temperatures starting to cool down it is time to turn attention to your lawn. After a long hot summer even existing lawns need some TLC and the sooner you do this the better it will look for the autumn.
- This will enable your lawn to go into the winter months looking lush and healthy. If your lawn is looking tired, yellow, full of weeds or just a little thin then it’s time for an autumn renovation.
- Fertilise with Turfmaster Gold to encourage strong growth.
- Spray weeds with a broad range weed killer such to control broadleaf weeds. About 3-4 weeks later scarify the lawn heavily to create a good seed bed. Oversow bare or weak areas with the appropriate Gti Prolawn seed blend and fertilise with Turfmaster Starter.

Product of the Month

Vegetable Garden Special: Purchase our ready to assemble Veggie Station garden box and ½ m³ *Living Earth* Garden Mix to fill it for only \$179.00! Available from 8 March 2010.

PLUS you get a **FREE** \$25 *Palmers Gardenworld* Gift Card and a **FREE** bottle *Living Earth* Liquid Compost! You’ll have the best veggies in town!



Garden Thought of the Month: “Why try to explain miracles to kids when you can just have them plant a garden.” Robert Brault

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