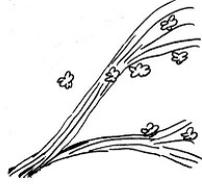


April

Weather

Average temperatures range from the upper 30's at night to daytime highs around 70 degrees. By the end of April, temperatures have climbed to a range of mid-40's to mid-70's. The mean snowfall is one-half inch, and rain is slightly less than that. The average last freeze is April 18th in the Heights, but frost can occur anytime through the first week of May in town, especially in the Valley. In the East Mountain area, the average last frost date is around June 1st.



What's Blooming

The last of the fruit trees are in bloom: peach, crabapple, cherry, and nectarine. Forsythia, snowball, golden currant, viburnums, and other flowering shrubs are in their glory. The wisteria is in full bloom, and the lilacs have budded. Fragrant hyacinths are blooming, the daffodils are at their peak, and tulips are coming on strong. Spring perennials begin their bloom: Japanese anemone (*A. japonica*), creeping Phlox (*P. subulata*), blue flax, and ajuga (a really great groundcover).

April is blossoms. April is late freezes – and usually the loss of the apricot crop. But not always! April is rarely showers. April is the windiest month in Albuquerque.

Xeric Blooms

March's blooms continue into April and are complemented with rockcress (*Arabis alpina*), wallflower "Bowles Mauve" (*Erysimum linifolium*), catmint (*Nepeta*), cushion spurge (*Euphorbia polychroma*), creeping baby's breath (*Gypsophila repens*), candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*), Dutch Iris (*reticulata*) and other species Iris, creeping Mahonia (*Mahonia repens*), Blackfoot daisy (*Melampodium leucanthum*) and some other varieties, purple Verbena (*Verbena canadensis*), Palmer Penstemon, western sand cherry (*Prunus besseyi*), and Oklahoma redbud (*Cercis reniformis*). Later in the month you may see red valerian, iceplants, hardy geraniums, and red hot poker.

Garden Activities

April is hay fever month. It's not the only one, but it does have the highest pollen count despite efforts by the City fathers to eliminate pollen-rich plants from local nurseries. If you are an allergy sufferer, this is not the ideal time to work in your garden! Try to identify which plants around your home are producing airborne pollens that cause you misery. Consider eliminating them. Follow the pollen count through the city's web monitor or the newspaper and try to do most of your garden chores on low pollen count days. Check with local nurseries, call the Master Gardener hotline, or use the City's Guide to Xeriscaping which has a column in the back section for whether a plant

is a low, medium, or high pollen producer. It also lists the plants banned from Albuquerque for allergy producing pollens or invasive growth. So check this source out first if you're prone to pollen allergies. (See the Information Sources section of this book for more information on how to get a copy of this free guide).

Plants with large showy flowers rarely cause allergies because they are bee, moth, bird, or butterfly pollinated. It is the wind pollinated flowers which are usually small and inconspicuous that produce the fine, airborne pollens which cause allergies.

Some Albuquerque area and Santa Fe nurseries specialize in unusual plant varieties. Check the nursery listings in the "Plant Sources" section of this book.

To Do List

- Emerging growth on plants such as roses and grapes may be damaged by late freezes; the leaves wilt and look brown, but they may have protected the tender growth tip inside. After a freeze wait for at least a week to see if new growth emerges. If a branch fails to revive, it may be necessary to prune again, however wait until the next apex bud begins to emerge. Frozen plant tissue is soft and wet. Wait until it has dried before cutting it away since wet, open tissue invites infections.
- Perennials will usually not be harmed. Tender annuals may need to be replaced after a freeze. Slightly damaged annuals may put out new growth, but it will take at least a week to tell. Petunias, for example, are surprisingly frost hardy.
- As early flowers fade, cut or pinch them to encourage the plant to continue flowering. This is called "deadheading" and should continue all summer. If you don't deadhead, the plant puts its energy into seed production instead of blooms. There are some plants that continue to bloom without being deadheaded.
- When blue flax (*Linum lewisii*) has quit blooming and sets seed, cut it back, and it will rebloom during the summer rains. Flax self seeds in bare areas or you can collect and scatter the seeds where you want them.

Watering

If you have drip irrigation, examine the lines and emitters to be sure everything is working. Go through your drip irrigation replacement parts and take stock. Buy what you need to keep on hand for new plants and to repair what you have. A small plastic box with dividers and a tight lid helps organize everything – like a fishing tackle box. Be sure to keep recent transplants watered and to increase watering frequency as needed to compensate for drying winds.

Pruning

Prune spring-flowering shrubs as they finish blooming. Cut back enough to leave lots of room for new growth so you will not have to prune them again until next spring. Finish pruning roses and grapes by April 15th. Crape Myrtle blooms on new growth, so frost damage can be cut away as soon as new growth appears. Cliffroses need 1/3 of the oldest stems removed every fourth year (this is called rejuvenation when you cut the oldest stems). No other pruning is required. Honeysuckle vine should be thinned every third year. Cut Desert and Prairie zinnias to the ground each April. Shear Desert Globemallow (Louis Hamilton) to its hard center. Remove all the chocolate colored flower heads from Fernbush.

Planting

- By now your beds should be in top shape and ready to go. (See March “Garden Activities”.) Seeds from last year’s garden that need cool ground for sprouting should have made their presence known. Those that did not survive have provided you with new places to plant. CAUTION: Seeds that need warm ground for sprouting, e.g. summer annuals and vegetables, may not appear until June. Refer to last year’s garden map/plan to determine if you want to overplant a barren area.
- Ready, set, grow! It’s off to the nurseries! Buy your perennials now and get them in the ground before it gets hot. Plant cinquefoil (*Potentilla* species), Penstemon, and perennial blue flax, (*Linum lewisii*), French Lavender (*L. intermedia*) and rosemary. Wait until Cinco de Mayo for anything tender. Check your average last frost date which is by area of town in the Basics section. Frosts may occur any time into the first week of May, and you risk losing anything that is not cold hardy.
- Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and chiles may need frost protection such as “wall-o-water” if set out this month; be a weather watcher! Starting them outdoors early may be worth the trouble to get an earlier harvest. Planting in an old tire or “wall-o-water” provides warmth to the soil and extra protection from frost. A tomato cage covered with a clear plastic bag that has air holes placed in the top also works. The plastic bag reduces the drying impact of wind as well. Note that plastic which touches a plant, encourages frost burn on leaves – use cloth for frost protection.
- After the mid-April, plant vegetable and melon seeds. Transplant vegetable and melon seedlings anytime during the month.
- Strawberries can be planted anytime during the month, and established ones will not be very affected by cold nights.
- Plant raspberries, grapes, and asparagus.
- Plant your cool season (typically blue grass) lawns.
- Plant dahlias, cannas, lilies, and gladioli. You can plant most of the summer annuals and perennials by the end of the month.

Garden Tip!!! This is a good time to prepare the soil for your annuals and vegetables. Remove and discard all weeds and debris. Spread compost and manure and loosen the soil with fork using a prying motion which preserves the soil layers and organisms. Water thoroughly. If you solarized the beds in late February, redig them at this time. Avoid walking on wet beds because it causes soil compaction.



Troubleshooting

Ants & aphids — Ants and aphids go together. When you see ants in plants, you know aphids are present. Ants drive away aphid predators. Control ants in and around the garden, and you’ll increase natural predators. On trees, a band of Tanglefoot™-type barrier will help keep ants off the tree, which will allow the natural aphid predators to do their work uninterrupted.

Cypress bark beetle.— Watch cypress trees for browning or breaking tips. This is the cypress bark beetle. Since the insect lives on a dying tree elsewhere, treating your tree will have marginal effects. Making sure the trees have sufficient water is the best protection.

Euonymus scale —An organic approach suggests that scales are often well controlled by beneficial predators, except when these natural enemies are disrupted by ants, dust, or use of persistent broad-spectrum insecticides. If scales become too numerous, a well-timed and thorough spray using horticultural (narrow-range) oil applied either during the dormant season or soon after scale crawlers are active in late winter to early summer should provide good control. Provide plants with good growing conditions and proper cultural care; especially appropriate irrigation, so they are more resistant to scale damage. Prune off heavily infested twigs and branches. Consider replacing problem prone plants. Euonymus scale can be treated with systemic insecticides. To monitor treatment or insect progression, blast the plants with water to dislodge old shells.

Fire blight — Fire blight is a disease of pears, apples, hawthorns, and some other members of the rose family. Growing tips turn black and wilt as if scorched by flame. Typically, in our area fire blight is a minor problem and may not need treatment. If the damage is widespread, remove all infected plant parts. As you work, clean the pruning equipment between each cut by either wiping the blades with rubbing alcohol or dipping blades into a diluted chlorine bleach solution, (one cup chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.) Or you can spray rubbing alcohol on the blade between cuts and wipe dry.

Grubs — Lawn grub damage is most noticeable now. While the grubs are easily found by digging, they will soon pupate, and insecticides will be almost useless. August is a better treatment time when the new young grubs are more vulnerable. The organic treatment employs the use of Nematodes, microscopic worms that carry a bacteria lethal to grubs. Wait until the soil temperature of your lawn is over 55 degrees Fahrenheit and the soil is moist. Nematodes will not harm beneficials such as earthworms, nor are they a danger to humans, pets, or other animals. If your law is infested with white grubs, try milky spores, bacteria in granular or powder form. They remain in the soil to kill any future infestation of grubs. The two best times to apply milky spores are spring and fall. Like nematodes, milky spores are not harmful to beneficial insects such as honeybees, nor will they harm humans, pets, or other animals.

Powdery Mildew — Mildew rears its ugly head on some roses, lilacs, and some vegetables. The presence of these fungi indicate warm moist conditions exist so your first step should be to reduce the amount of water, the frequency of watering, or the time of day it's applied. The second step is to get more air circulation around the infected plants. Try not to use overhead watering and do water early in the day so the sun can dry the leaves. Other treatments run from using fungicides to removing the most mildew-prone plants. You might start with dusting the plants with sulfur at first sign of mildew to prevent its spread. Never apply sulfur when the temperature is expected to get too high. Sulfur treatment can be done in early spring but is not usually recommended in late spring or summer, because of possible damage to plants if temperatures go above 90 degrees. Diluted whole milk works with some pants.

Tent caterpillars—Tent caterpillars may appear in several different tree species. The tents are usually webbed close to the crotches of stems and branches. Introducing natural enemies in your garden and also providing good bird habitat can reduce the problem naturally. Chemical treatment requires tearing open the tent before spraying. Since most caterpillars pupate and leave, the problem may be self-limiting. Pruning out and burning affected branch tips is also effective.

Houseplants

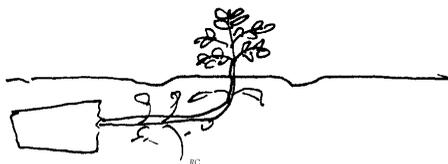
Watering needs increase with sunnier and warmer days. Fertilize with half the recommended amount twice a month. Be sure to watch small transplants – **NEITHER** overwater nor allow the soil to get overly dry. Keep plants that you are growing for transplanting in a sunny place in indirect light or continue to grow under artificial light. Read a houseplant book to learn about your plants and what they need (see the Information Sources of this book for ideas).

Around Town

- The African Violet Club Show and Sale is held in April. What lovely gifts for Easter or Mother's day. Call 296-6020 for details.
- A little more prickly, but neat just the same, the Cactus and Succulent Society Show and Sale is held the third week in April. There's a lot more to cactus than you think!
- You won't want to miss the Annual Garden Fair at the Albuquerque Garden Center, held the last Saturday in April from 9-4. This is an annual fund raiser for the Center. The sale features unusual plants donated by Albuquerque gardeners and also plants grown in local nurseries for this event. On hand will be Master Gardeners to help with plant selections and to answer any questions. Plants included in the sale are annuals, perennials, herbs, and vegetable transplants (the most unusual varieties of tomatoes in town). Xeric, native plants, daylilies, and water garden plants are also available.

Planting Tomatoes

Do you know how to plant tomatoes? You might want to try early planting -- after April 15th, if you have a sheltered area, a warmer than average micro-climate, or you want to try using a "wall-o-water" (mini greenhouse). Prepare soil by digging and amending it with compost in early April. Dig a hole 12-18" deep and 12-18" wide. Amend this with granular slow-release fertilizer (use compost combined with fish or kelp meal for an organic approach) and ½ c. Epsom salts. Back fill the hole with several inches of soil. Choose a 12" or taller plant, remove the lower leaves, and lay the plant in the hole with some of the stem in the hole. Back fill, covering most of the stem, and water thoroughly. Protect from frost as needed. Your tomato plant will produce roots all along the buried stem creating a stronger stem and root system and you get a thrill from being able to tell your friends you planted early. Depending upon the weather, you should have tomatoes several weeks earlier than if you plant in mid – to late May. You'll also have fewer insect problems.



May

Weather

May's nighttime lows average from the mid-40's to mid-50's. The daytime highs range from the mid-70's to mid-80's. There is no snowfall in town and maybe a half an inch of rain. There will still be some wind, enough to be a problem on the West Side. May is sunny and delightful.

Many home garden tours occur this month because the gardens are so beautiful. With the exception of an occasional windy day, the weather could not be better. Everything has leafed out - it's green and blooming. No chlorosis, no bugs, no heat stroke! With a little bit of work in the preceding months, anyone can look like a gardening genius. Unfurl your patio furniture and call your friends! This is the month to plan parties and enjoy the outdoors.



What's Blooming

Nearly everything blooms in May, especially all those gorgeous old-fashioned perennials that wane as the weather gets warmer: peonies, delphinium, Oriental poppies, Dame's Rocket, and Iris. Alas, garden lupine requires a more acidic soil than most New Mexican gardens offer. It's best to forego lupine, blueberries, dogwood and the various forms of azaleas and rhododendrons so common to the east coast. Many other flowering shrubs and vines do well. Look for Indian hawthorn (*Rapheolepis indica*), Viburnums, Spiraeas, Spanish broom (*Genista hispanica*), Clematis, and, of course, roses. A few late-blooming daffodils say goodbye to spring. Thrift, geraniums, and candy tuft can will provide a cheery accent.

Xeric Blooms

Apache Plume, chocolate flower, cinquefoils, Yarrows, Agastaches or Hyssops (e.g. bubblegum, Mexican lemon, and licorice mints), Columbines (*Aquilegia*), Coreopsis, Gaillardias, Perky Sue (*Hymenoxys argentea*), English lavenders (*Lavendula angustifolia*), blue flax (*Linum lewisii*), various evening primroses (*Oenothera*) and pinks (*Dianthus*) begin a long bloom season. Daisies, euphorbias, flax, gaura, hyssop, iceplant, Penstemons, phlox, red hot poker (*Kniphofia*), salvias, sundrops (*Calylophus*), and valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) begin their summer blooming season. Larger blooming shrubs include Cotoneasters, mock orange (*Philadelphus*), *Rosa rugosa*, Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), Spanish broom (*Genista hispanica*) and cherry sage (*Salvia greggii*). Red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) blooms everywhere and repeats through summer. A yellow one is also available. Trees blooming include mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin rosea*) and Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*).

Before choosing a new plant to add to you landscape this fall, take time now to determine what your garden needs-- color (complement or contrast), texture, height, etc. Do you need something new or more of an existing favorite plant? Make a note of plants to buy or order on August's calendar because for most non frost tender plants it's easier to survive our winters than our summers!

Garden Activities

Nothing is a “chore” in May! For gardeners, all parts of May are bliss!

To Do List

- Start fertilizing roses and flowers; use alfalfa pellets (horse food from the feed store) for a boost plus a 10-20-10 fertilizer.
- Make alfalfa tea as a treat for your roses: put 10-12 cups alfalfa meal or pellets into a 32 gallon plastic trash can with a lid. Add 2 cups Epsom salts (from the drug store) and ½ cup chelated or organic iron (from the nursery). Fill the trash can with water and stir well. Use one gallon per rosebush.
- Treat trees and shrubs that suffer from perennial iron chlorosis with chelated or organic iron or iron sulfate (see the Basics section for the best choice). If the tree is not adapted to our climate, you may want to find a replacement tree.
- Give warm season grasses like Bermuda, buffalo, and blue grama a nitrogen fertilizer like seed meal, fish emulsion, composted manure, or topdress with compost. If you didn't last month, apply a second treatment of pre-emergent herbicide such as corn gluten around perennials, in your xeriscape, and in rock gardens, but NOT WHERE YOU WANT TO ADD SEEDS or want reseeding.
- Plan ahead. Chrysanthemums are a glorious blaze of color in the fall, and they are easy to grow. If you have mums growing, now is the time to pinch them back, and continue to do so through mid-July to make them bushier and to keep them from flowering before fall. When Shasta daisies finish blooming, cut them back to get another bloom period later.
- Seed warm season lawns such as buffalo grass anytime from late May through July.
- Give a containerized rose for Mother's day with a love certificate to plant it later in the month.
- Most importantly - if the daytime temperatures stay above 85, change your irrigation to the summer schedule.

Watering

Watering is tricky in May. Small, new plants haven't yet developed enough roots to handle sudden hot weather and must be spot watered daily or as needed. Here's a trick to determine if a new transplant has “taken root”. About 2 weeks after setting out the plant, try tugging on it VERY, VERY gently; if you feel some resistance, its roots have spread into the surrounding area and you can probably reduce watering.

This is the time to think about reducing the amount of water that will be used in your garden this year. All irrigation systems should receive preventive maintenance. Replace sprinkler heads (with the same brand and size of head) and emitters that are not working properly. Adjust emitters for plant growth and remove flags if using that type of emitter to clear accumulated deposits. As trees and shrubs grow, emitters need to be moved further away from the trunk into the feeder root area which is at the drip line and out. The drip line is where the tree canopy drops water onto the soil. Place 2 – 4 inches of mulch around trees (not touching the trunk), shrubs, and perennial beds. Continue to mulch annuals as they grow.

If you have lawn sprinklers, check the spray pattern. Dry spots will tell you where adjustments are needed. Get it fixed now so you won't be over-watering all summer for a few dry spots. Read more about how to check the spray pattern in the Basics section of this book.

Pruning

- Continue to prune spring flowering shrubs as they finish blooming. By the end of the month be sure to cut back your chrysanthemums to encourage larger, bushier plants and larger blooms in the fall. Remove twiggy growth, seeds (Desert Willow), and suckers on Desert Willow and New Mexico Olive trees every 2 - 3 years. Prune dwarf Butterfly Bush and Rosemary back by 1/3 or thin every few years by removing the oldest, largest stems.

Planting

- Continue to plant gladioli at 2 week intervals for continuous bloom.
- Plant other summer-flowering bulbs and corms: Cannas, dahlias, lilies, ornamental onions (*Allium*). You can also plant daylilies at this time. These are heat-tolerant plants that do well here. Coleus and caladiums are more challenging, needing full shade and moisture.
- Plant beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant, melons, pumpkins, peppers, squash, and tomatoes. Start some from seed and transplant the ones you started in February and March. And don't forget to plant some green chiles!
- Most container plants, balled-and-burlapped trees, and annual seeds can be planted this month, but watch the weather and give extra water or protection if it begins to get hot or gets very windy.
- Clean out containers, hanging baskets, and window boxes, and fill them with new plants to enjoy all summer. Use a variety of color, texture, and heights -- some tall and some trailing vine-like plants. Try a new plant in several different containers and locations to determine what it prefers in your garden. Encourage kids to create and maintain their own mini-garden.

Garden Tip!!! If you haven't already done so NOW is the time to start your garden journal. Each week find time to make a hot cup of tea or coffee (or an ice cold drink) to sip as you take a 15 minute sabbatical from your other responsibilities and enjoy a soothing walk through your garden - documenting what you planted, what's blooming, and what needs to be done. Note what you want to do this month and at some later date. Jot down what you wish you had already done. (If you already began a journal, review both last month and last year's entries to schedule what you want to do this week and later in the month.) Sample a few early strawberries and sniff the fresh air. Be thankful for the day and your garden. Several times each week find time to escape into your garden and enjoy it - even if it's only for a moment or two.



Troubleshooting

Now insects are becoming active!

Aphids & ash leaf curl aphids — Aphids are everywhere! Usually a forceful water blast will dislodge many of them. Before reaching for heavy-duty chemicals, try insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils (either dormant or delayed-dormant), earwigs, syrphid fly larvae, parasitic wasps, and ladybird beetles (ladybugs). For ash leaf curl aphids or other aphids that roll the leaf around themselves, systemic insecticides (ones that are taken up inside a plant) may be the better choice since once the leaf curls contact insecticides aren't effective. Aphid populations tend to be higher in plants that are fertilized with nitrogen and freely watered because this causes the new growth that aphids prefer. Removing the first set of aphids in the spring is a two edged sword - the beneficials won't come to your garden if they don't have their food sources e.g. aphids. Avoid excessive watering and fertilizing and choose slow release organic sources instead.

Box elder bug/Red shouldered bugs — Another problem you may notice is the box elder bug that feeds on Golden Rain tree seeds and on maple seeds. These black and red bugs apparently do no other damage but can be plentiful. Do not bother with chemicals, just vacuum them up then empty the bag in the trash.

Lilac/ash borers — As you continue looking at trees and shrubs, watch lilac and ash stems for the emergence of borers (also called the lilac/privet borer). They leave behind their pupal skins attached to the trunk. Use pheromone traps to capture the moth stage or since partly grown insects overwinter in the stems, the infected branches can be cut out and burned by April 1. Infected branches are marked by swollen areas with cracked bark that has separated from the wood.

Ash bark beetles - The point of attack is the remotest part of the plant and there isn't good information on the timing of sprays, which can lead to repeated applications that might be too much for the local beneficials. So plant health is very important. If the ash tree can't make it on the space and water available, then the most responsible and ultimately effective solution is to take it out. Improving soil fertility may help the tree but if nitrogen fertilization is overdone, it will likely lead to increased sap sucking insects like scale and aphid. Dormant pruning of dead, damaged, weakened, and badly placed branches will reduce the potential pest habitat, but if the tree is drought stressed they will attack all the right-sized growth. If you feel compelled to treat it anyway, permethrin will kill adults it contacts, so a preventative spray might help. Permethrin is a powerful, broad-spectrum insecticide with wide toxicity beyond insects making it not that different from chemicals like carbaryl (Sevin) except with a faster decay rate. The beetles overwinter in small holes in the lower trunk bark, migrating up to feed and mate in the small diameter branches sometime in the spring. Anywhere from March through May likely is the time the adults are moving up from the overwintering site. Assuming you can time it right, this would be the time for a contact spray on the trunk. A canopy spray in this time frame may also stop them from getting where they feed and rear their young.

Miller moths — Miller moths are not just annoying; they lay eggs which hatch into cutworms. Use a commercial insect zapper or containers of water into which detergent has been added. If you have a lot of them, be sure to check in the fall and spring for grubs. If necessary, treat the soil.

Pine needle scale —Recommend these do not need control measures, at least here in our area. They are predated by at least two lady bird beetle species, as well as egg parasitoid wasps. If one could time an application of insecticidal soap to the crawler stage activity, when young larval forms are on the move, the spray would have a positive effect in terms of killing the crawlers. We probably have 2 generations per year here, but I've not found any direct statement to that effect. Eggs are laid under overwintering females' scale covering which after hatching, spread out sink in a bore hole, and change color from reddish to a translucent scaled stage. The white waxy coating follows this color change stage. The young would be vulnerable to soaps or horticultural oils from hatch through translucence (the soft body stage), but not after the waxy coating is developed.

For pine tip moth—Recommend timed applications of either *Bacillus thuringiensis* or spinosad. The timing on this revolves around when the moths are flying, mating and laying eggs. Older data shows fairly typical activity around the last week in April and the first week in July, with a window of at least a week on either side. Bt has a very short residual, and would need reapplication every 4-5 days, while spinosad would need reapplication every 10-14 days. One could also trap the moths with pheromone sticky traps. With traps, one could more precisely schedule spraying, or one could hope that enough males were trapped out to make a difference.

Pitch moths—Piñon pines often develop oozing areas on their bark. Pitch moths feed on the pitch, not the wood. This is the most visible, but least problematic, of the piñon pests. Generally, no treatment is needed. You can remove the pitch and look for the tiny worm either in the pitch or just under the bark, but it's a messy job and you may cause more damage to the tree than the insect is causing! Insecticides won't work here.

Snails & Slugs—If your garden is lush and moist, snails and slugs will find you. Begin a trapping or baiting program now. Baits such as Sluggo or Snail-B-Gon are generally more effective.

Thrips—Horticultural oils (summer weight), spinosad (negative effect on bees!), or neem (no reported negative for bees) sprays should help control them.

Woolly apple aphid — White cottony growth on apple and crabapple is probably woolly apple aphids. The main damage is done below ground to the roots, where treatment is nearly impossible. Remove suckers from the base of the tree, as aphids seem to love them. In summer prune water sprouts on limbs to remove another prime aphid host. Also, summer pruning lessens sprouts returning. Consider using a mix of horticultural oil and insecticidal soap. Destroying the aphids above the surface may reduce the problem.

Houseplants

If you haven't repotted yet, make an effort to find time this month -- be sure to mix in a slow release granulated fertilizer. Feed and groom your plants regularly. An easy schedule is to feed and groom plants on the weekend closest to the 1st and 15th. Pick two days a month -- about two weeks apart--that will work for you. When using a liquid fertilizer, use 1/2 the recommended strength, twice a month. This provides necessary nutrients while minimizing salt build-up. Be sure to water until the water drains out the bottom of the pot. If your pot does not have drain holes, be sure that it has good drainage and be careful not to drown your plant. Overwatering eliminates needed oxygen in the soil. For plants that need to dry out between waterings, always check before watering them to ensure that the soil is dry at a depth of one inch. Plant water needs vary greatly depending upon location, humidity, the maturity of the plant and the size of the rootball. Know your houseplants.

Some plants, such as African Violets, should never be allowed to dry out. Some plants should not be placed out of doors. Some plants should be misted daily. There are many great references available to help you identify your plant and determine its specific needs or check the Garden Talk section of this book for Houseplants.

If you want to place your houseplants outdoors for the summer, move them to a very sheltered spot when nighttime temperatures are above 65 degrees. With just a few plants, you could begin setting them outdoors earlier and bring them in at night until the weather warms. Monitor closely for dryness. Wind and direct sunlight can quickly destroy a houseplant.

Around Town

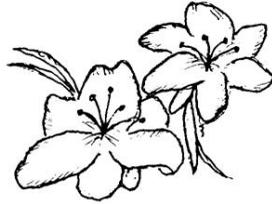
- You'll want to attend the Aril and Iris Society annual Mother's Day show at the Albuquerque Garden Center. Arils are a form of iris but more exotic. They will have plant lists to keep handy for their sale later in the summer.
- The Annual Garden Tour benefitting the Albuquerque Garden Center takes place in late May. Interesting gardens in various neighborhoods of Albuquerque are featured and lunch is available for purchase at one of the gardens. This is a don't miss event if you enjoy seeing attractive landscapes and unusual plant combinations, or you just want a fun day touring.
- The color beds at the Rio Grande Botanic Garden freshen up for summer when the annuals are planted. The staff puts out approximately 30,000 plants for summer. This usually takes place right after Mother's Day.

June

Weather

Yes! Its getting hot! Spring weather in New Mexico is so fleeting that it is gone before you have a chance to identify and appreciate it. The first week of June is characterized by average temperatures in the 50's at night to the 80's during the day. After that first week, it's likely to get into the 90's on many days. June is usually a dry month without much wind.

June is when the hot weather begins and it takes its toll on the garden. It's a golfer's delight, but a gardener's fright! Rather than trying to maintain the all-over bloom effect that comes so easily in May, focus your attention on a single flower bed or part of a bed. There are a number of plants that tolerate the heat and they come in colors that complement one another. Tough prairie plants, often considered noxious weeds in other parts of the country, take on new charm by their mere willingness to survive in the hot, dry heat of New Mexico.



What's Blooming

Lilies! Calla lilies (*Zantedeschia*), daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), Oriental lilies, Asiatic lilies - June is lily month. Don't miss the daylily show at the Albuquerque Garden Center at the end of June.

Veronica, and sage are in bloom, as well as Larkspur, California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), and members of the Dianthus family—carnations (*D. caryophyllus*), sweet William (*D. barbatus*), and assorted "pinks" are blooming. Also in bloom are foxtail lily (*Eremurus*), columbine (*Aquilegia*), Delphiniums, and snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), and Catalpa trees.

Roses may take a rest and start blooming again this month.

June is the first flush of wildflowers in the Sandias. Look for the beautiful pink calypso orchids which bloom along the 10K Trail below Sandia Crest. Even though New Mexico is high desert, in the higher mountainous areas of the state there are several types of native orchids.

Xeric Blooms

Many plants that began blooming last month will continue through the summer if you remove the spent blooms (deadhead) on a weekly basis. Blooming this month are: Evening and Mexican primroses (*Oenothera*), yarrow (*Achillea*), prickly poppy (*Argemone squarrosa*), chocolate flower (*Berlandiera lyrata*), winecups (*Callirhoe involucrata*), valerian (*Centrathus ruber*), red hot poker (*Kniphofia*), silver lace vine (*Polygonum auberti*), desert four o'clock (*Mirabilis multiflora*), hardy

African daisy (*Osteospermum barberiae*), many Penstemons, Salvias, and Verbenas, golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), New Mexico locust (*Robinia neomexicana*), and chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*). Also, butterfly weed, chamomile, coneflowers, harebells, lavenders, Mexican poppies, Persian cornflowers, and dwarf plumbago.

Garden Activities

The onset of really hot weather affects all but the most heat-loving plants. Measurable solar radiation (intensity of sun rays) in Albuquerque is greater than most plants like. Give them some protection from full sun all day which results in less stress and you will have fewer pests and problems.

To Do List

- Continue dead-heading as flowers fade.
- Fertilize roses to encourage the next flush of bloom
- Use nitrogen fertilizer on warm-season grasses, like Bermuda. An organic alternative is compost, compost tea or fish emulsion.
- Stake fast-growing plants as needed before they begin to flop over.
- Its time to dig unwanted plants (including those blessings from plants you never got around to deadheading last year), share them with friends. Pot a few and give to someone in a nursing home, give to a friend or call the hotline to list them on the Plant Exchange.
- Plant a few melon seeds. Besides providing you with fruit, they make a wonderful living mulch in the late summer and fall.

Garden Tip!!! An easy way to help acidify our alkaline soil is to mix pine needles into your compost pile and beds or use them as top dressing. If possible, chop them finely first to aid decomposition. Or left whole, they make a superior weed barrier, especially on paths.

Watering

Adjust your watering schedule for warmer weather, if you didn't do this in May. Add mulch where plants are drying out too quickly. Generally, water established trees and shrubs every 10 to 14 days deeply. Water established beds weekly. This is not adequate for new plantings or in soil that has little organic matter (i.e. holding capacity for water). Floating shade fabric over vegetable rows helps reduce evaporation, reduces insect problems and increases production. Consider rain barrels for the coming monsoon season. They can be used to collect and/or re-direct water from canales to where it's most needed. Thoughtfully planned water harvesting can reduce overall water usage. Examples include using rain barrels or creating berms and swales to direct water to ponding areas for plants that need more water.

Going on vacation? Having trouble keeping your potted plants watered? Consider installing a drip-irrigation system with a timer to eliminate the need for hand watering those patio plants. Pre-packaged kits are readily available. You'll need to consider placement of the container (cannot be easily moved after drip installation), individual plant watering requirements (each plant in the grouping must have similar needs), whether the manufacturer also sells individual parts, how high or low your water pressure is, etc. Once installed, be sure to perform weekly maintenance to check for clogs, pressure (not enough, sufficient, or too high), and water (Are the plants getting the right amount? Do you need to change the timer?).

Pruning

Continue pruning shrubs that have finished spring flowering. Remove unwanted growth now so that you won't remove next spring's blooms (which form on this year's new growth). The earlier you prune, the more aggressive you can be. Pinch back mums again near the end of the month.

DO NOT cut back bulb foliage after they finish blooming. Bloom stalks and leaves are needed to make food for the bulbs, ensuring next spring's blooms. You can remove them when both stalk and leaves are brown – they should pull easily. **DO NOT** braid the leaves (a garden "tip" on some popular TV shows). Leaves need to soak up all the sunlight possible. If you don't like their appearance, plant a "screen" to block the dead foliage from view or interplant them with plants that are forming new foliage such as daylilies.

Planting

Buy and plant six-packs of annuals for now and think about a long-term strategy for next year.

Continue to fill bare spaces with them -- multicolored cosmos, zinnias and perennial *Scabiosa* (pincushion flower) make lovely plantings atop spring bulbs, ensuring you do not forget to water the them and helping to cool the ground in July and August. Give new plants extra shade the first few days to help establish them, and water twice a day until the plants look strong. Even xeric plants need extra water when set out, especially in June. For a bright and colorful bloom display from August to the first hard frost, plant sunflowers, cosmos, marigolds, salvia, and zinnias.

In the vegetable garden: continue seeding and setting out plants that love warm soil such as basil, corn, and beans. Melons, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers should go in by mid-month so there is enough time to make a crop. After June 20th you can plant cauliflower and broccoli seeds for a fall crop.



Troubleshooting

Bagworms — Bagworms are solitary insects in small "sleeping bag" cocoons constructed of leaf or needle bits. They may be found on a number of different trees, from sycamore to apple to juniper, and more. Treatment is easy; cut them off. If noted early enough, Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) can be used. Just make sure you apply the product when the insects are actively trying to build their little "sleeping bags" and thoroughly treat the foliage around the bags. Optimum timing is usually in June. Insecticides are ineffective once the bag is formed.

Borers - The first thing is to keep the plants healthy with appropriate watering and keeping soil from becoming compacted. Once insects are under the bark, there isn't a good way to kill them, so preventing entrance is the key. Wood boring insects deposit their eggs where a tree has some damage with sap seepage. The emerging larvae immediately enter the tree there and do damage. You may try spinosad for borers that are lepidopteran as it works well on them. Spray the trunk and major branches during the period of potential infestation, which runs from late April through mid-July (generally that time frame is right, but any given year's actual weather may push it forward

or backward by a few weeks). Sprays should be re-applied about every 14 days. Most edible crops are limited to 6 or fewer applications per year, but there is no apparent restriction for use on ornamentals. Pyrethrum is also labeled for borers, but is a much wider-spectrum (though “organic”) chemical.

Cicadas & Grasshoppers —You may notice the pupal casings of cicadas on tree trunks. Enjoy their songs in a few weeks. Grasshoppers are becoming noticeable. Since they are migratory, spraying just kills today’s visitors. Try putting out baits along property line boundaries or covering precious plants with row cover material.

Elm Leaf and Cottonwood Leaf Beetles - These beetles have two to four generations a year. Adults feed on emerging foliage and lay eggs soon after. Larvae hatch out in about a week and feed on leaves. They overwinter in the adult stage. Natural and organic remedies include birds, lady beetles, praying mantis and assassin bugs among others. Don’t plant Siberian elms and cut down the ones you have. An organic alternative *Bacillus thuringiensis* ‘San Diego’ may be used to control early instar larvae, spinosad can control larvae and *Beauveria bassiana* can be used to kill overwintering adults.

Leaf miners — When leaves develop tunnels between the upper and lower surfaces, leaf miners are at work. They’re found in many different plants. Treatment ranges from ignoring (which is the most cost effective alternative), picking off infected leaves, or spraying with a systemic insecticide which is more control than the insect actually warrants, based on the limited damage it does.

Slime flux — That’s the stinky ooze coming from cottonwoods, mulberry, and other trees. Slime flux is caused by a bacterial infection of the tree’s sap. There is no cure, and it shouldn’t even be attempted. Trees live decades with the problem. To reduce the stinky mess, wash the tree with water or a weak bleach solution. Unfortunately, the slimy ooze will also kill other plants. Avoid splashing other parts of the tree or surrounding plants to prevent spread of the disease.

Spider mites — The heat brings a spider mite population explosion. These minute sucking pests are especially prevalent on miniature roses, roses, junipers, cypress, marigolds, hollyhock, other flowers and shrubs. Look for what appears to be fine webbing covering the plants. Daily water blasts with a powerful water wand dislodges the mites, and they are not able to crawl back up. Most insecticides do not harm mites.

Use ultra-fine horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, or the two combined. There are miticides available, but they are mostly restricted-use materials, and are largely harmful to the beneficial predator mites. Mites are related to spiders; a miticide will kill them but may lower your population of helpful spiders.

Spruce galls and ash flower gall mites — Spruce trees may develop strange swollen growths at branch tips. These are galls caused by adelgids (small, aphid-like sucking insects); they are not miniature spruce cones. Remove them. Ash trees may develop strange galls in the leaf canopy. Resembling “Grape Nuts” cereal, these are ash flower gall mites which only bother the male flowers. Treat as a curiosity.

Sycamore scale—Sycamore leaves may be blotched in what appears to be a disease. This is actually a minute scale. Most trees are too tall for homeowner application. Consult an arborist; the effective time for treatment is early spring before the leaves expand.

Houseplants

Container size matters. Water needs increase this month - some of your plants may need watering twice a week, especially those pathos and Swedish ivies that you forgot to repot. Succulents and small new transplants in large containers may only need watering twice a month. Be especially careful all year around to not drown your plants. Most house plants die from too much water -- not too little! Are your plants showing stress? Losing leaves? Turning yellow? Common culprits include your cooling system and window coverings. Plants do not like drafts. Check the air flow against your plants --even moving them a few inches may make a great difference. How has the light changed? When the windows are covered to keep out the sun, the plants may not be getting enough light. Conversely, some plants may get too much if the windows are left uncovered. Take a few minutes at different times of the day to walk around and analyze each houseplant's needs for the summer: light, water, humidity, pot, children and animal hazards. Consider moving a sick plant to another location or even another room; hanging vs. table or floor; pot size; appearance; drafts, and quantity. If you have too many plants, give a couple as gifts.

Around Town

- The Albuquerque Rose Society's show is a much anticipated event. Held in early June, it is lovely with roses of every type on display. Call 296-6020 for the date.
- The Daylily (*Hemerocallis*) Show and Sale is also a great event held the last week in June. Albuquerque Daylily Society members select a wide variety of daylily cultivars that do well in Albuquerque, with more variety than you will find at the nurseries. Be sure to arrive early for the best selection. The Society maintains several public daylily beds including the President's home at UNM and the Kathryn Neely bed at the Albuquerque Garden Center. Call 296-6020 for the show date.
- Two very fragrant events in late June are the Lavender Festivals in Alcalde and Corrales (last Saturday in June). Displays, plants and lavender products are available at both shows and knowledgeable folks are around to answer questions. Watch the media for exact dates, as the times vary a little from year to year.