

## MOVING HOUSEPLANTS OUTSIDE

It is often helpful to set many houseplants outside for the summer so they can recover from the low light levels endured during the winter months. As soon as night temperatures stay consistently above 55 degrees F, houseplants can be moved to their summer home. Choose a spot that has dappled shade, is protected from the wind and is close to water. A porch or a spot that receives shade from trees or buildings will work well. Putting houseplants in full sun will cause the leaves to photooxidize or sunburn because the leaves have become adapted to low light levels inside the house. Where possible, sink the pots into the ground to help moderate root temperatures and reduce watering frequency. If you have a number of plants, dig a trench 6 to 8 inches deep (or deeper if you have larger pots) and long enough to accommodate all of your plants without crowding. Place peat moss under and around the pots. Peat moss holds water, helps keep the pots cool and reduces evaporation from clay pots. About every two weeks, rotate the pots a quarter turn to break off any roots that have penetrated the peat moss surrounding the pot and to equalize the light received on all sides of the pot. Water as needed. If the potting soil is dry a half-inch deep in the pot, it is time to water.

### *Cabbage Worms*

This is the time of year we normally start seeing damage from cabbage worms. The imported cabbage worm is usually the first cabbage worm species to appear and is a fuzzy, elongated green worm. Larvae come from eggs laid by the white butterfly often seen flitting around the plants.

Early control is essential to reduce injury. BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) and spinosad (Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer and Tent Caterpillar Spray; Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew) are effective organic products that are labeled for this pest. BT can be found in Dipel, Thuricide and other similar materials. Direct sunlight deactivates BT quickly so it is helpful to spray late in the day or on a cloudy day. Conventional insecticides such as carbaryl (Sevin), malathion and methoxychlor are also effective but will kill natural enemies of these pests. Be sure to hit the underside of leaves where insects feed. Note that hitting the underside of leaves is easier when using a dust applied with a duster than when using a liquid spray.

### *Rabbits in the Garden*

Rabbits in gardens are a perennial problem because of the wide variety of plants they can feed on. This time of year, they gravitate to young vegetables and flowers. But there are some vegetables that are rarely bothered including potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, and some peppers. The question is how do you protect other, more susceptible plants? Fencing provides a quick and effective control method. The fence does not need to be tall; 2 feet is sufficient for cottontails. But the mesh must be sufficiently fine (1 inch or less) so young rabbits will not be able to go through it. Support for the fence can be supplied by a number of products, but electric fence posts work well. Often fencing is not an acceptable choice because it affects

the attractiveness of the garden. Another type of barrier is a floating row cover. Though most often used to promote early growth by keeping plants warmer than normal, it can also help protect young plants from insects and wildlife. Other ways to control rabbits including repellents, trapping and shooting. Repellents are often suggested for control but often do not last long and require frequent reapplication. Also, many are poisonous and cannot be used on plants or plant parts destined for human consumption. Live traps can be used to collect and move the rabbits to a rural area several miles from where they were trapped. A number of baits can be used to entice the rabbit to enter the trap including a tightly rolled cabbage leaf held together with a toothpick. However, rabbits often avoid baits if other attractive food is available. Another possibility is to use a motion-activated sprinkler. These are attached to a garden hose and release a short burst of water when motion is detected. Contech, Orbit and Havahart are suppliers and each is advertised as protecting up to at least 1,000 square feet. Shooting is another possibility when it is safe and legal to do so.

### ***'Staggering' Sweet Corn Planting***

Sweet corn is one of those crops that is only "good" for a few days. If you want longer periods of production, consider staggering the planting. In other words, plant a small block, wait a period of time, and then plant the next block. Though it is tempting to follow a calendar schedule, such as planting a small block every week, it is better to use crop development as a trigger. If you plant on a calendar schedule, you may have noticed that later plantings often catch up with earlier ones. Instead, plant the next block of corn when the previous one is one-half to one inch tall.

### ***Aphids***

Aphids are small insects, about an eighth of an inch long. They are soft-bodied, pear-shaped and of many colors, such as green, black, gray, yellow or red. Some are winged during certain times of the year. Aphids feed by sucking sap from buds, leaves, twigs and developing fruit. Most of that sap is passed through their body and ejected through two small "pipes" known as cornicles that project from the rear of their bodies. This ejected, sticky material is called honeydew. This honeydew often becomes black with sooty mold fungus. Automobiles parked under trees with large aphid populations will often be spotted with honeydew. Though the finish will not be harmed by the honeydew, it is a hassle to clean off. Aphids usually are controlled effectively by nature. Adverse weather conditions such as beating rains and low temperatures, as well as fungus diseases, insect predators and parasites, keep the aphids in check. Aphid enemies include lady beetles, syrphid fly larvae, aphid lions and small wasp parasites known as braconids.

Most insecticide applications destroy beneficial insects as well as pests and leave trees or shrubs unprotected if pest resurgence occurs. Because beneficial insects play an important role in natural aphid control, try washing aphids away with a forceful stream of water (if practical) before using insecticide sprays. If control measures are warranted, use insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, malathion, cyfluthrin or permethrin. Reapplication may be needed. Imidacloprid (Annual Tree and Shrub Insect Control, 12 Month Tree & Shrub Insect Control, Max Tree and Shrub Insect Control, Bonide Systemic Granules IC, Bayer Tree and Shrub Insect

Control) is a systemic insecticide that can be used to prevent aphid populations from building but must be applied early to allow time for the pesticide to move to the new growth. This time period may vary from one week to three months depending on the size of the plant with very large trees taking the most time.