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The Country Gardener

### Gardening Pot Pourri

If you're gonna be going to the nursery to buy some plants for your yard or gardens, here are a couple of tips to help you get the biggest bang for your bucks.

- Buy only the plants that you definitely plan to plant almost as soon as you get home. It's not good to leave them setting on the patio for 3-4 days or next weekend when you'll have time to plant them.
- Cover the plants carefully when you take them home. Our warm days will dry them out something fierce if you take them home in the back of the pickup uncovered. If you have to do it this way, be sure to water them immediately when you unload them. Be sure to wet the leaves, too. They're usually the driest part.
- Be sure to apply some type of liquid root stimulator when you set them out. Organically speaking, use colloidal phosphate or rock phosphate. Does the same job.
- Be sure to keep the new plants watered. Just because they're identified as xeriscape plants, that doesn't mean that they don't need ANY water. Water them at least weekly for a few weeks until you see some new leaves. That means that they have their roots out.

If you haven't done it yet, there is still time to add some organic matter to the soils in your beds and gardens...compost, peat moss, shredded tree leaves, or well-composted manure. It'll make more difference than anything else you can do right now. If you have a tiller, work any or all of these ingredients into the soil as deeply as you can. 8-12 inches would be great. If you have clay soil where you live, you might wanna consider adding some WASHED sand along with the organic matter, but not without it.

Don't fertilize the lawn grass yet. I'll tell you when. It is time, however, to put out the pre-emergent herbicide. The nights have started cooling down and the seeds will be starting to germinate any time now. Get right on it.

Evidently, this is a banner year for insects—especially aphids. They're sap-sucking insects that can literally suck the life right out of a shrub or tree. They are a pear-shaped little bugger and can be any color from white to black. Fortunately for us, they are the food source for lots of other bugs, but the good bugs aren't always around to help us out. The safest treatments for aphids are those that include insecticidal soaps and oils. These products actually smother the insects by blocking up their breathing apparatuses (apparati?). Whatever. But you have to get the bug wet with the spray or it won't do any good. Sometimes just a strong spray of water is all it takes to knock them off the plant and they aren't strong enough to crawl back up so YOU WIN this one, bubba.

On Saturday, October 16, at the San Antonio Botanical Garden education building, I'm gonna be talking from 9 am to noon on Compost and Soils for the Northeast Independent School District. The next Saturday I'll be talking again on Spring Veggies. If you're interested, call 210-657-8866 and c'mon down.

Since I've been writing these gardening articles for over three years, I've accumulated quite a few pages of information—well over 150 pages of stuff...plus I've written numerous articles for other newsletters, journals, etc. and some monthly calendars which have been circulating for years. I've been thinking about possibly putting them all together into a bound copy and maybe selling it. But before I take on something like this, I'd like to have your ideas on what you think about it, if you'd be interested in buying one, etc. One friend has already suggested that there be a comprehensive index for it so that she could find exactly what she wanted easily. Good idea. I checked on that process using Microsoft Word and it's doable. Next suggestion, please???

Send your comments and/or questions to [gardener@gvtc.com](mailto:gardener@gvtc.com).