

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

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Late-Emerging Perennials

By Cindy Haynes
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Butterfly Weed

As the growing season progresses, there are noticeable changes in the flower garden. Yet, sometimes we worry when some of our prized perennials have not shown any evidence of life.

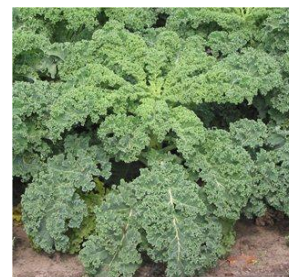
Don't worry. There are several perennials that are perpetually tardy every year. These perennials require warm soil and air temperatures to get started in the spring. Sometimes they do not emerge from the soil until June!

This means the gardener must be patient with some of their flowers. Don't remove or plant other perennials on top of these belated beauties. They will likely poke their heads up when you least expect it. Mark their locations in the garden so you know where they are located and wait. Your patience will be richly rewarded with loads of flowers in late summer.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Hardy Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus</i> hybrids
Russian Sage	<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>
Butterfly Weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
Balloon Flower	<i>Platycodon grandiflorus</i>
Blue Spirea	<i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i>
Red-Hot Poker	<i>Kniphofia</i> hybrids
Crocoshmia	<i>Crocoshmia x crocosmiiflora</i>
Whirling Butterflies	<i>Guara lindheimeri</i>
Maiden Grass	<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> 'Gracillimus'
Black eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia</i> sp.
Joe Pye Weed	<i>Eupatorium</i> sp.

Uncommon Produce for the Garden

By Jennifer Boussetot
Department of Horticulture
Iowa State University



Kale plant

Each spring gardeners plan out their vegetable gardens with tomatoes, onions, and peppers predominating. There is good reason for that; few other crops are as useful and versatile in the kitchen. However, if you are looking to add some diversity to your vegetable garden this year, here are five less common choices that are very easy to grow in your garden.

Kale: The health experts tout this as one of the healthiest foods you can eat. The good news for gardeners is kale is incredibly easy to grow. Sow seed directly in the ground as soon as the soil can be tilled in the spring. Once the plants are established, leaves can be harvested for use. The mature plant is cold hardy and will survive very low temperatures in the fall. In fact, it typically outlives all of the other plants in the vegetable garden.

Parsnips: This surprisingly tasty and versatile root requires a long season to grow but can be kept in the garden over the winter for storage. Direct seed parsnip any time after April 1st in Iowa for a fall or following spring harvest.

Amaranth: As a grain crop with an ancient history, this incredibly fertile plant (hundreds of thousands of seeds are produced on one plant) can yield a rewarding harvest. Two words of warning: it is closely related to a common garden weed in Iowa, red root pigweed, and the seed has to be properly winnowed to be useful in the kitchen.

Rutabaga: As a member of the Brassicaceae family (as is kale), this root crop has that distinctive broccoli flavor. However, if roots are harvested early they are more tender and mild. Since the seed are so small, plantings typically need to be thinned in early May.



Rutabaga plants

Garlic scapes: While garlic is planted in the fall and not necessarily a unique crop, harvesting the immature flower buds are not a common practice among most gardeners. Watch for the flower stalks to emerge in early May. As soon as they begin to curl, but before the flowers open, they are ready for harvest. Cut the stalk as close to the foliage as possible. They add a fresh garlic taste to cuisine.

Additional information for the more common vegetable crops in your garden can be found in the ISU Extension publications [PM 819, Planting a Home Vegetable Garden](#) or [PM 534, Planting and harvesting times for garden vegetables](#).

It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you *do* want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!

~Mark Twain

Dealing with Tree Damage after a Storm

By Richard Jauron
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Iowa State University

Stormy weather frequently damages trees throughout Iowa. In most cases, the extent of tree damage isn't due to the luck of the draw.

Certain tree species are much more susceptible to storm damage than others. For example, silver maple, Siberian elm, willow and green ash are quite vulnerable to strong winds. Oaks, lindens and sugar maples are less susceptible to storm damage. In addition to tree species, the age of the tree, its condition and maintenance history also determine the extent of storm damage. Large, old trees with a structural weakness, such as some trunk decay and those with narrow branch angles are particularly susceptible to damage. No tree species can withstand the fury of a tornado.



Assessing storm-damaged trees

Carefully examine trees to determine the extent of damage. Give immediate attention to trees that are hazards to people or property. If a power line is involved, utility company personnel are the only ones who should be working in the area. After the elimination of hazardous situations, individual tree care can be assessed.

Storm damage to a tree can vary from a few small broken limbs to complete destruction. Severe damage to the main trunk often warrants removal of the tree. Trees that have sustained major trunk damage are no longer structurally sound and may come down completely in the next storm. Trees that have the majority of their crown destroyed are probably not salvageable.

Caring for storm-damaged trees

When pruning damaged trees, use correct pruning techniques to minimize the size of the wound and avoid flush cuts. Remove stubs by pruning back to an undamaged side branch, main branch or trunk. Generally, pruning paints are not necessary. However, wounds that occur on oaks between March 1 and July 1 should be painted to reduce the potential transmission of the fungus responsible for oak wilt. When painting

pruning cuts on oak trees, use a latex house paint rather than asphalt or creosote-based paints.

The pruning of large branches and damaged branches high in the tree canopy should be left to trained arborists. Cabling and bracing may be appropriate if the cost involved can be justified. Cabling and bracing do not save trees that have suffered extensive structural damage.

Tree removal and replacement

If tree removal and replacement ends up being your only alternative, select tree species and cultivars with a sturdy reputation. Excellent maple species include black and sugar. Oak species for Iowa include white, swamp white, bur and red. Linden (both American and littleleaf), American hophornbeam and ginkgo are other possibilities. Selection of a sturdy tree species alone will not ensure a strong tree. Proper pruning when small is imperative.

ISU Extension publications contain additional information on caring for trees damaged during storms: Managing Storm-damaged Trees – Sustainable Urban Landscapes (SUL 6); Choosing an Arborist (RG 214); Pruning Trees: Shade, Flowering, and Conifer – Sustainable Urban Landscapes (SUL 5); and Understanding the Effects of Flooding on Trees – Sustainable Urban Landscapes (SUL 1) can all be downloaded from the [ISU Extension online store](#).

Planting Herbs in Containers

By Tigon Harmison
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Iowa State University

Herbs are a wonderful addition to any garden. They can be grown in vegetable gardens, in flower



gardens, or in containers. Growing herbs in containers is a great way to have fresh herbs close to the kitchen for cooking. Some container grown herbs can then be moved indoors when the growing season is over for further enjoyment.

Herbs can be grown in various types of containers. Terra cotta and clay pots are popular. Clay pots work well because they provide a stable anchor and allow air to move through the root zone. Plastic works well too and is lighter and therefore easier to move around. Hanging baskets and window boxes can also be used. Be sure the container has sufficient drainage holes in the bottom. Several herbs can be grown in one container or

each herb can have its own container. Some perennial herbs can be taken inside and grown during the winter, so consider that possibility when selecting the container(s) for your herb garden.

Herbs grow best in well-drained soil. Select a well-drained, commercial potting mix or combine potting mix, peat moss, and perlite in equal parts.

The water requirements vary depending on the species of herb being grown. Some herbs need to dry out between watering while others prefer to stay moist. Herbs grown in clay containers may require more frequent watering because they tend to dry out faster. Plants should be watered before they begin to wilt severely. In the heat of the summer, this could be as frequent as once or twice a day. When grouping multiple herbs in one container, be sure their water requirements are comparable.

Herbs require full sun whether they are grown indoors or outside. Place the container in a location where it receives at least 4 to 6 hours of sunlight each day. Perennial herbs grown inside over the winter may require supplemental lighting. Although herbs do not require as much fertilizer as other container plants, they will benefit from periodic light fertilization with a dilute fertilizer solution. Rampant or spindly growth can be controlled by pinching.

Leafy annual herbs should be harvested when the flower buds first appear. This is when the flavor from the volatile oils is best. Remove the top leaves and stems with a sharp knife or shears. Cut just above a leaf or pair of leaves. Leave 4 to 6 inches of plant material on annual herbs. Perennial herbs can not be harvested as heavily as annual herbs. Remove only the top third of the plant or the leafy tip growth on perennial herbs. Harvest the herbs as needed in the kitchen.

Below are some container herb groupings to try:

Italian cuisine: parsley*, basil*, oregano, sage, rosemary, thyme

Aromatic herbs: lavender, hyssop, chamomile, pineapple sage, lemon verbena

Teas and Beverages: chamomile, catnip, spearmint, peppermint

* These plants are annuals.

Upcoming Horticulture Events of Interest:

Mills County Master Gardeners PLANT/BAKE SALE

Date: Saturday, May 7

Time: 8:30 – 11:30 AM

Place: Parking lot west of
Glenwood State Bank



☀ High quality, low cost plants including annuals, perennials, houseplants, vegetables, ornamental grasses and more!

☀ Raffle Items, Garden Art, Baked Goods!

Mills County Master Gardeners GARDEN WALK

Date: Wednesday, June 8

Time: 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Location:

56587 221st St., Glenwood

104 Linn Court, Glenwood

**NE Elementary Nature Center
901 N. Vine St., Glenwood**



Admission: Free Will Donation

You are cordially invited to stroll through the beautiful gardens at the residences of:

Kathy King & Mike Kent
and
Sharon Agnitsch

As well as to view the newly restored and renovated Nature Center at NE Elementary School. Come and see what the children, with the help of teachers, parents, and Master Gardeners have created!

Park in the school parking lot, off Linn St. and then you will be able to view the nature center and walk to both of the yards from there.

The two sites include a large yard with a water garden and a newly built home with newly planted beds. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer any questions.

Ant Mounds in Lawns and Sidewalks

By Donald Lewis
Entomology Department
Iowa State University



There are many species of ants that occur in lawns or along and under sidewalks. Most ants are beneficial and do not require control. However, ants may become a nuisance by constructing mounds or small hills in the lawn or on the sidewalk or patio, or by invading the home in search of food. There are no fire ants in Iowa; our ants are not biting or stinging pests.

Soil-nesting ants construct mounds or small hills by bringing granulated soil to the surface from the nest below. These mounds may be unsightly, may cause lawn unevenness, and if large, may smother out the surrounding grass. On the sidewalk or patio the deposited soil may be unsightly.

To avoid some of the worst ant hill trouble, rake or wash the anthills smooth on a regular and frequent basis as they appear. Use a rake or water stream from the garden hose to disperse the soil. The need for such maintenance will be greatest during periods of prolific ant nesting activity (such as during periods of wet spring weather). Only as a last resort should it be necessary to spot treat anthills with an insecticide such as permethrin, cyfluthrin or esfenvalerate. Rake the anthill flat and sprinkle granules onto the soil surface or drench the mound area with diluted solution. Read and carefully follow instructions on the insecticide label.

Ask the ISU Extension Gardening Expert

My forsythia shrubs are vigorous and healthy, but don't bloom well. Why?

Forsythias bloom on old wood. Unfortunately, the flower buds on some varieties are not reliably cold hardy in Iowa. For example, the flower buds on 'Lynwood Gold' and 'Spring Glory' are hardy to minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Since most areas in Iowa experience winter

temperatures below minus 10 F, these cultivars often don't bloom well in the state.

Improper pruning is another possible cause. Flower buds on forsythias begin to develop by early summer. Pruning the shrubs anytime from mid-summer until just prior to bloom will drastically reduce flowering. To achieve the best floral display, forsythias should be pruned immediately after flowering.

Should I fertilize a newly planted tree?

It is generally not necessary to fertilize newly planted trees. Most Iowa soils can supply sufficient amounts of nutrients during establishment. If trees are growing poorly two or three years after planting, fertilization may be beneficial. Poorly growing trees often exhibit sparse foliage, yellow-green leaves or short annual twig growth.

Should I stake a newly planted tree?

Staking is not required for most newly planted trees. However, large trees and those planted in windy, exposed sites may require staking. If staking is necessary, allow the trunk to move or sway for proper trunk and root development. To prevent damage to the trunk, use strong, wide strips of canvas, rubber or other materials to support the tree. Remove the stakes as soon as possible. In most cases, stakes should be removed after one growing season.

In regards to tomatoes, what is meant by the terms "determinate" and "indeterminate"?

Determinate and indeterminate describe a tomato variety's growth habit. Determinate tomatoes are small, compact plants. They grow to a certain height, stop, then flower and set all their fruit within a short period of time. The harvest period for determinate tomatoes is rather short, making them good choices for canning. Indeterminate tomatoes continue to grow, flower and set fruit until killed by the first frost in the fall. Accordingly, the harvest from indeterminate varieties often extends over a two to three month period. Yields are generally heavier than determinate types, but fruit are usually later to mature. Indeterminate tomatoes are large, sprawling plants which often perform best when grown in wire cages or trained on stakes.

When purchasing tomato plants, are big or small plants better?

When purchasing tomato plants at your local greenhouse or garden center, select stocky, dark green plants. Plants should be 6 to 10 inches tall with stems about pencil-size in thickness. Avoid large plants with flowers and fruit. Early fruit development will stunt plant growth and reduce total yield.

What is the proper way to plant tomatoes?

Tomatoes perform best when grown in fertile, well-drained soils in full sun. Soil structure and drainage of heavy, clay soils can be improved by incorporating organic matter, such as compost or peat, into the soil. Raised beds are another option for gardeners with heavy, clay soils. Planting sites should receive at least six to eight hours of direct sun daily.

If the plants are in peat pots, tear off the top edge or make sure the top edge is well below the soil surface once planted. If the top edge of the peat pot is exposed to the air, it will act like a wick and draw moisture from the soil around the plant's roots. If the tomatoes are in plastic pots or cell-packs, carefully tap out the plants. Use a sharp knife to cut around plants growing in small flats.

Set plants into the soil up to their first true leaves. Pinch off the bottom leaves of tall, lanky transplants and lay them sideways in a trench. Carefully bend the stem upward so that the upper few inches of the stem are above the soil surface. Roots will develop all along the buried stem.

Spacing of plants depends on the growth habit of the variety and training system employed. Indeterminate varieties that are staked can be planted 1½ to 2 feet apart in the row. Indeterminate plants grown in wire cages should be spaced 2½ to 3 feet apart, while a 3- to 4-foot-spacing would be appropriate for indeterminate tomatoes allowed to sprawl over the ground. Determinate, ground-grown tomatoes can be planted two feet apart. Rows should be spaced about four feet apart.

How do I control violets in my lawn?

Violets are difficult to control in turfgrass areas. Digging up the plants is an option for home gardeners with a small infestation of violets. Broadleaf herbicides are the most practical solution when dealing with large numbers of violets. Broadleaf herbicides containing triclopyr usually provide good control of violets. Applications can be made in spring (when the violets are blooming) or fall. Two applications, two to three weeks apart, are usually necessary to achieve good control.

Should I bag my grass clippings when mowing the lawn?

When the lawn is mowed properly, grass clippings do not need to be removed or bagged. Small clippings filter down into the turf and quickly decompose, returning essential plant nutrients to the soil. Lawn clippings do not significantly contribute to thatch development.

MAY GARDENING TO DO LIST



- After danger of frost, plant your tender perennials such as caladiums, cannas, crocosima, gladiolas, dahlias, and tuberous begonias.
- Plant tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, pumpkins, squash, and melons after danger of frost. Be ready to protect seedlings if frost threatens.
- Stagger plantings of beans and corn for extended harvest.
- Pinch chrysanthemums back once they have grown to about 6" in height. This will promote compact growth and more blooms to enjoy this fall.
- Harden off young plants to help them adjust to sun, wind, and variable temperatures. Several days before planting, cut back on water, move transplants outdoors to a protected location, and leave them out for a couple of hours. Each day, leave them out for a longer time. Bring them back in if frost is predicted.
- Don't remove foliage from tulips and other spring-flowering bulbs until the leaves turn completely brown. The leaves are creating food resources and translocating them to the bulbs for next year's flowers.
- Harvest asparagus until the stalks become pencil-thin. Then stop harvesting until next year.
- Thin lettuce, carrot, and radish seedlings.
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs, such as lilac and forsythia, immediately after blooming.
- Remove blossoms from newly planted June-bearing strawberry plants to allow for better runner formation.
- Scout for eastern tent caterpillar on apple, crabapple, and wild plum to find tents and remove them in the evening when the caterpillars are present.

- Start a compost pile. It is best to have a mixture of organic materials. Dry leaves mixed with fresh grass clippings, straw and hay, sawdust, and finely chopped or shredded tree and shrub prunings will produce wonderful compost!
- Dig and Divide herbaceous perennials to control size, retain vigor, and/or to propagate more plants. Early spring-blooming perennials should not be divided at this time.
- Heavily bearing apple trees should be hand thinned 6 weeks after bloom to.
- Move houseplants outdoors into a shady, protected location for the season, if desired.

Resources for Horticulture information

ISU's Hortline at (515) 294-3108

(Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m)

ISU/Mills County Extension: 712-624-8616

www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/yardgarden.htm

Iowa State University Publications

RG 105	Guidelines to Seasonal Garden Chores (free)
NCR 0025	Lawn Weeds and Their Control (\$7.25)
PM 874	Starting Garden Transplants at Home
PM 1591	Community Tree Planting & Care Guide
PM 0819	Planting a Home Vegetable Garden
PM 534	Planting & Harvesting Times for Garden Vegetables (Free)
RG 206	Questions about Composting (free)
RG 319	When to Divide Perennials (free)
SUL 6	Managing Storm-Damaged Trees

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>



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