

# Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

Coordinator and Mills County Horticulture Program Assistant

**Mills County Extension**  
61321 315th St; P.O. Box 430  
Malvern, IA 51551  
712-624-8616

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills>

Prepared by: Shirley D Miller, Mills County Master Gardener

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## May is finally Here!

May in Iowa will often change from year to year, but warmer weather is just around the corner! Here are some gardening tasks that are usually best completed in May.

If anything has been missed during your April clean-up, make sure to get it now. Make sure all perennials are cut back to avoid new growth from growing through the dead foliage. This is especially important for ornamental grasses



Prune out any dead branches on trees and shrubs. It may be too early to tell at the beginning of the month, so continue to watch for new growth on branches. Some plants do take longer to come out of dormancy, like Rose of Sharon and roses. Only trim out branches that you are certain are dead and show no life inside of bark.

May is a good time to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials.



Plant cool season vegetables, onion sets or plants, and potatoes, as well as direct sow peas and beans now. Plant tomatoes, peppers, and other warm season vegetables in the middle of the month.

If you skipped cleaning out your containers last fall, now is the time to do so before you add new plants. Be sure to remove all potting mix and replace with fresh potting mix. This will help your container plants thrive and get the nutrients they need to look amazing this spring into fall. If you had any disease issues in your containers last year, be sure to disinfect with bleach.



Start planting summer containers. If starting the first of May, check the extended forecast and plan to protect soft tissue plants like coleus, impatiens, and begonias if the temperatures should dip close to freezing. Nighttime temperatures should be around 40 degrees for most summer annuals and 50 degrees for tropical plants.

If you usually use a pre-emergent (like Preen) on beds to help combat weeds, now is the time to put in down on your beds. Make sure to avoid any area where you will be planting seeds.

Watch for animals that may be chomping on your plants. Use a repellent early to deter animals from making your yard the neighborhood buffet.

Put down Sluggo or diatomaceous earth in your hosta beds to prevent slugs from eating on new leaves. Prevention now will help the plant look its best. If caught too late, many of the leaves will have visible damage throughout the growing season. If you have regular problems, mulching with pine needles will keep slugs away.



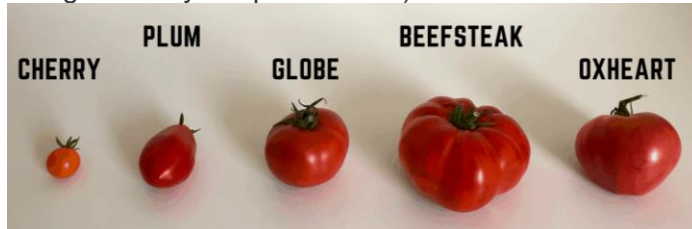
## Tomatoes, so many to choose from!

What will you do with your tomatoes that you grow? Do you eat them fresh, do you cook with them? Maybe you like the juice and freeze or can them. Whatever it is you do with your tomatoes, you are not alone. Tomatoes are the number one grown plant in the backyard garden. There are tomato varieties for eating fresh and ones that are grown specifically for canning and freezing. What is the difference? Well the old fashioned Rutgers tomato that your Grandmother grew, has more acid in it that helps to preserve the juice when canned. If you use varieties that are meant for eating fresh, you will need to add a teaspoon of lemon juice to each quart jar. The acid in the lemon juice will help preserve and keep it from turning brownish.

### So let's explore the world of tomatoes!

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Here are the five basic types of tomatoes (as categorized by shape and size).



**Cherry Tomatoes** (Mini Tomatoes)

**Plum Tomatoes** (Paste Tomatoes)

**Standard Globe Tomatoes** (Regular-Sized Slicer Tomatoes)

**Beefsteak Tomatoes** (Large Slicer Tomatoes)

**Oxheart Tomatoes** (Heart-Shaped Tomatoes)

Once categorized by shape and size as above, tomatoes can also be described as either heirloom or hybrid, determinate or indeterminate, and also by peel color.

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### Cherry Tomatoes (Mini Tomatoes)

A favorite of tomato lovers everywhere, cherry tomatoes are one of the most versatile tomatoes around. With red, orange, yellow, and purple varieties, these tomatoes are a cooking mainstay, adding a burst of color and flavor to any meal. Sweet and tangy, cherry tomatoes can be cooked,

grilled, sauced, dried and eaten fresh as a healthy raw snack.

Cherry tomatoes are small, snappy bite-sized tomatoes. This tomato type is reminiscent of the wild tomatoes that still grow as wild berries in South America. Cherry tomatoes can be incredibly juicy, popping at the slightest pressure.

Cherry tomatoes combine mini-sized cuteness with snappy flavor and a sturdy form. Cherry tomatoes are great for fresh snacking, in salads, for grilling, and in fresh veggie wraps. They are pretty on charcuterie trays and hors d'oeuvres. Cherry tomatoes make great appetizer finger food or can be part of the main course on skewers or mixed into fresh pasta.

Some examples; Sun Gold Cherry, Tiny Tim, Sweet 100, Super Sweet 100

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### Plum Tomatoes (Paste Tomatoes)

Plum tomatoes are oblong tomatoes bred to make excellent tomato sauce. Plum tomatoes are also called processing tomatoes or paste tomatoes. These tomatoes are grown to be cooked! Roast them, blend them, and can them to enjoy your tomato harvest all year long.

Plum tomatoes are generally about 2 to 2.5 inches long and are almost always oval or cylindrical in shape. They've been bred with canning in mind. They're mainly solid pulp, with easy-to-remove seeds in compact compartments. Many are also bred to shed their skins easily for easier processing of the pulp into the sauce. Plum tomatoes are generally red, although a few varied cultivars exist. Plum tomatoes are firm, solid, and perfect for making classic tomato sauces. Many plum tomato-type cultivars have been bred for use in classic Italian recipes. They can be canned whole or processed into a thick paste for storage. Plum tomatoes can also be used in applications where a "juicy" tomato is not desired, such as on top of a pizza or to make sun-dried tomatoes.

Some examples, Roma, Amish Paste, Juliet.

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### **Standard Globe Tomatoes (Regular-Sized Slicer Tomatoes)**

Standard globe tomatoes are the everyday grocery-store tomatoes that we all grew up with. These are medium-sized slicer tomatoes perfect for salads and other fresh applications. Globe tomato types were bred to be round and have thick skin. They have a uniform, spherical look about them and rarely split. Most importantly, they ship well, are shelf-stable, and are extremely versatile in culinary applications. Due to their all-around appeal, most commercially grown tomatoes are standard globe tomato types.

Standard globe tomatoes are generally about 2 to 2.5 inches across. Almost all cultivars are red, although there are a few other colors available.

These classic domesticated tomatoes are grown in both hothouses and in open fields. They may be sold on the vine or individually.

Globe tomatoes have been bred to withstand shipping, storage, and other hardships of commercially-grown tomatoes. Their thick skin helps them stand up to heat in culinary applications. They're also suitable for eating fresh slices. Use versatile globe tomatoes in sandwiches, burgers, pickling, grilling, salsa, canning, juicing, and in egg dishes such as omelets and frittatas.

Some examples; Better Boy, Bodacious, Celebrity, Early Girl, Fourth of July, Green Zebra, Marion, Moneymaker, New Girl, Rutgers



### **Beefsteak Tomatoes (Large Slicer Tomatoes)**

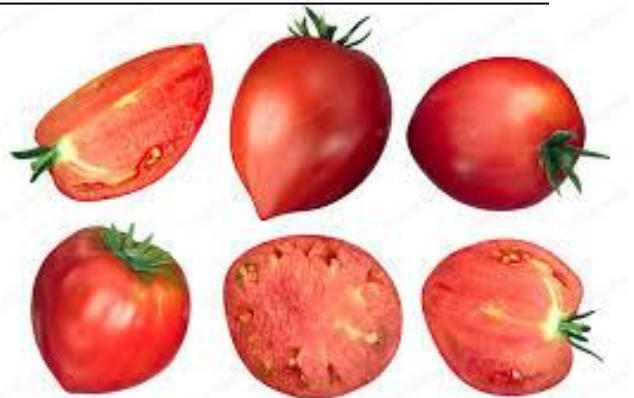
Beefsteak-type tomatoes, also called large "slicer" tomatoes, are the classic tomato for enjoying fresh on a piece of toast or simply on their own straight

from the vine. These hefty slicing tomatoes are grown in backyards and market gardens for their delicious taste and large size. Many varieties are slightly flattened, lobed, and have small seed cavities. Beefsteak-type tomatoes have a thick consistency, which contributes to their ability to hold shape when being sliced. This makes these tomatoes an ideal choice when making burgers and sandwiches.

Beefsteak tomatoes are generally at least 3-4 inches across and weigh about a pound each. Some beefsteaks can weigh up to 2 or 3 pounds per fruit! These truly are giant tomatoes. These tomatoes were generally bred for flavor, color, or size and are rarely grown commercially due to their thinner skin, long time to maturity, and short ripe shelf life. Grow them on your own or find them at a local farmer's market!

Beefsteak Tomatoes are perfect for slicing fresh onto a sandwich or diced in a salad. They make beautiful Caprese tomato salads and add brilliant flavor to cooked dishes such as frittatas and fresh pasta.

Some examples; Beefsteak, Big Beef, Big Boy, Beefmaster, Aunt Ruby's German Green Tomato, Mortgage Lifter, Black Krim, Brandywine, Cherokee Purple



### **Oxheart Tomatoes (Heart-Shaped Tomatoes)**

Oxheart is a unique type of tomato that is shaped like large a strawberry or "heart". Like beefsteak-types, they are mainly heirloom varieties grown for their flavor, size, or thick consistency with very little seed cavity. Unlike beefsteak tomatoes, however, oxheart tomatoes are not lobed and more closely resemble spherical globe tomatoes (with an added pointed end).

Oxheart tomatoes are generally used in the same applications as beefsteak, typically for slicing but also for canning.

Some examples; Anna Russian, Cour di Bue, Hungarian Heart, Kosovo, Livingston's Giant Oxheart, Yellow Oxheart

Once categorized by shape and size, tomatoes can also be described as either heirloom or hybrid, determinate or indeterminate, and also by peel color.

### **Heirloom Tomatoes vs. Hybrid Tomatoes**

**Heirloom tomatoes:** are old-fashioned varieties that have been passed down from generation to generation. Heirloom tomatoes are open-pollinated, self-fertile varieties from which seeds can be reliably saved and grown into new plants with the same characteristics. While there are different definitions around, most gardeners consider an heirloom to be a tomato that has bred true for about two generations, or at least 40-50 years. Heirloom tomatoes are known for their interesting variety and excellent flavor.

**Hybrid tomatoes:** are modern cultivars that have been bred using natural methods to produce certain types of tomatoes. Hybrid tomatoes are not open-pollinated nor are they heirlooms. To grow the same tomatoes each year, home gardeners must buy new seeds from the seed company each spring. Hybrids are known for their ease of growing, disease resistance, and reliable productivity. It is important to note that the terms heirloom and hybrid have nothing to do with the size or shape of the tomato. There are tiny heirloom cherry tomatoes and giant beefsteak heirloom tomato types.

### **Determinate vs. Indeterminate**

This type of tomato classification refers to the vining habit of the plant.



**Determinate** tomatoes have a relatively “pre-determined” size. They grow in a bush form and then set all their fruit at once. This is good if you are canning and need a large amount of tomatoes all at once. Determinate tomato plants are annuals. Once these plants are finished growing their fruits, the plant is done and will die.



**Indeterminate** tomatoes grow on long rambling vines and set fruit as they grow. These ramblers keep on growing and fruiting until killed by frost or disease. These tomato plants can be perennials in their native habitat. While tomatoes are not long-lived plants, they can survive for multiple years if conditions allow (warm temperatures, disease-free), or if you can bring them in during the winter.

Both indeterminate and determinate tomatoes are almost always grown as annuals in home gardens. While there are certainly exceptions, most cultivated heirloom tomatoes grow on large, vining indeterminate tomato plants. This is perfect for home gardeners who want a small but continuous supply of fresh tomatoes for their household. These plants space out the timing of their ripe tomatoes. They just keep on growing! Indeterminate tomatoes, including most heirlooms, require large tomato cages (or at least a tomato stake) to support their heavy vines.

### **Slicing Tomatoes vs. Paste Tomatoes**

**Slicing tomatoes** are tomatoes that are well-suited to fresh eating. Beefsteak tomatoes are the largest slicing tomatoes, standard globe-type tomatoes are the most common, and even cherry tomatoes can also be used for slicing (particularly in salads).

**Paste tomatoes** are tomatoes that are well-suited for sauces and canning. These tomatoes make wonderful tomato paste and are long-lasting when preserved. While most paste tomatoes are plum tomatoes, there are several varieties of globe, oxheart, and cherry tomatoes that have been cultivated specifically for preserving instead of for fresh eating. For example, the Italian heirloom cherry tomato “Principe Borghese” is well-known as being for sun-drying and for making flavorful tomato sauce.

Whatever you choose to grow in your garden, tomatoes are among the simplest plants to grow.





### **Creamy Lemon-Pepper Shrimp Spaghetti**

**YIELD:** Serves 4      **PREP TIME:** 10 minutes  
**COOK:** Stove Top      **TOTAL TIME:** 25 minutes

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 3/4 lb. spaghetti
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. McCormick ground black pepper
- 6 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, divided, plus wedges for serving
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (8-oz.) block cream cheese, cubed
- 1/4 c. freshly chopped parsley leaves

**OPTIONAL:** Steamed Asparagus

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

In a large pot of salted boiling water, cook spaghetti according to package directions. Drain, reserving 1 cup pasta water, and return spaghetti to pot.

Meanwhile, in a large heavy skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Add shrimp and season with 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Cook, tossing occasionally, until shrimp is pink and just cooked through, (4 minutes). Add 2 tablespoons lemon juice and toss to coat. Remove shrimp from skillet and reserve on a plate.

In the same skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, (30 seconds). Add remaining 1/4 cup lemon juice and cook, until reduced by half, 1 minute. Whisk in 3/4 cup reserved pasta water and cream cheese. Bring to a simmer, whisking constantly, until cream cheese is completely melted into the sauce.

Add cooked pasta and shrimp to skillet and toss to coat. Add more reserved pasta water if necessary to loosen sauce. Season to taste with more salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley. Serve with lemon wedges.

**Optional:** Add fresh steamed asparagus



### **Do You Remember When?**

It was time to plant! Dad, Grandpa and my brother were in the field with the 4 row planter, pulled by the I-H Farmall Super M-TA, the workhorse of the farm! No cab, no air, no radio, no GPS, no high tech anything, just clean simply basic farming. Natural fertilizer from the feedlot, no herbicides, instead they cultivated. As the Farmers' of the day would said, "I've got my corn laid by twice", meaning that the corn had been cultivated 2 times. So many of those sayings have been forgotten or never heard of by the younger generation. Like "Knee high by the fourth of July". If your corn crop was that tall on July 4th, it was doing very good, and should produce a profitable crop. Farmers' also watched nature for clues of when things should be done, like, "When the Plum bushes bloom, its warm enough to plant" or "Mare tails clouds in the sky means rain coming in the next day." "Cattle gathering in tight groups mean storms coming." While the guys were in the fields, Mom and I were in the garden. The potatoes had already been planted, so we were planting radishes, lettuce, spinach, onion plants, peas, cabbage, parsnips and green beans. The warm crop vegetables would be planted later. Our patch or asparagus was sending up big thick sprouts, ready to eat. Rhubarb was up and growing. It was also time for cleaning off the perennial flower beds and prepare those and others for planting the annuals. We had several crates of gladiolus that we stored over winter in the cave. (Back then every farm had a cave to store food in and it doubled as the storm shelter.) Gladiolus were among my Mothers favorites. I got the job of placing them in the long rows that Mom made with her hoe. First I had to prep the corms by popping the old growth off of the new corm that had formed over winter. Mom was meticulous. They were kept sorted by color, and were to be replanted in the order she wanted. The bed was about 30 yards long and felt like it just took forever to plant! The other 30 yard long end of that bed was planted in strawberries, but that is another story of its own. Spring was a time of new life. Everything seemed renewed. Plants were greening up and leafing out. Animals, both domestic and wild, were having babies. It was time for getting baby chicks. There was new life everywhere you looked. Crop fields, gardens and flower beds were popping with new life! A time of joy! Winter was over and Spring was welcomed in with crocus, daffodils and tulips! I believe that "Spring" is my favorite time of Year!

**Happy Spring Everyone! ☺**



## May UP COMMING EVENTS



- **May 7, 2022** – Mills County Master Gardener Plant Sale. 8:30am to 11:00am, located in the parking lot at the corner of 1st St and Locust St, Glenwood, Iowa 51534  
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/master-gardener-program>
- **May 8, 2022** – Mother's Day
- **Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page**  
<https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- **Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page**  
<https://www.facebook.com/iamastergardeners/>
- **The Plant Sleuths Facebook Page** – Check this page for any insect or plant problem. Download clear pictures and the group will help with answers.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/291895194628196>

## May GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Plant** your cool crop vegetable plants after the threat of frost is gone, usually Mother's Day.
- **Asparagus** – You should have your patch cleaned off. Check daily for sprouts. Cut or snap off when they are 8 to 10 inches tall
- **Raspberries** – Carefully prune the old dead wood out. Remember that raspberries are produced on last year's branches.
- **Plant** Trees and shrubs. Early spring is the best time. Make sure you keep a good watering regiment for the first full year.
- **Hummingbirds return** – Place Hummingbird feeders out. Remember not to fill full. Start with a small amount of juice, working up to larger amount as more birds return for migration. Feeders should be cleaned and filled with new juice every couple of days.
- **Baltimore Oriels return** – Place Oriel feeders out. They love grape jelly and fresh cut oranges. Liquid feeders and juice are available at your local hardware and farm stores. Clean feeders every couple days.
- **Plant Summer Bulbs** – plant dahlias, gladiolus, caladiums, Calla lily and other summer bulbs.

- **Rhubarb** – When harvesting rhubarb, remember to never cut more than 1/3 of the plant. The leaves should be discarded, as they are poisonous to eat. Cut out or remove any seed stalks to encourage the plant to produce more cut able stocks.



## Resources for Horticulture information Iowa State University Publication

PIDC 48	Safe Mushroom Foraging
PM 994	Asparagus in the Home Garden
PM 870B	Container Vegetable Gardening
HORT 3087	Cole Crops
PM 719	Rhubarb in the Garden
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries
PM 814	Where to Plant your Vegetable Garden
PM 820	Garden Soil Management
PM 819	Planting a Home Vegetable Garden
PM 534	Planting and harvesting times for Garden vegetables
PM 870A	Small Plot Vegetable Gardening
RG 111	Creating Raised Bed Planters
HORT 3091	Tomatoes
PM 1313	Growing Garden Peonies
HORT 3077	Early Spring Blooming Perennials
PM 1072	Establishing a Lawn from Seed

## Horticulture Publications on-line

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

## ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

### Hotlines available for all

**Iowa Concern 800-447-1985** Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

**Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999** Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

**Teen Line 800-443-8336** Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

**Iowa 2-1-1 211** Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

### Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

**AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883** Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)  
**Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229** Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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