

# Garden Club Horticultural Hints

May 2019

*Spring is finally in full bloom!*



*Peonies are up and growing now. When the rains stop, don't let the plants dry out or you will risk losing the flowers. And, for larger (show worthy) blooms, pick off the side buds on each stem leaving only the terminal (main) bud.*



As spring flowering shrubs and trees finish blooming, prune them. If you wait until summer, you may be pruning off next season's flower buds. Didn't get as many blooms as you hoped from those shrubs? Scratch a light application of fertilizer into the soil now. It is not necessary to buy a special fertilizer for acid-tolerant plants such as rhododendron, azaleas and blueberries; our New England soil is naturally acidic. And, as your bulbs finish blooming, you should deadhead the flowers, but leave the foliage alone. Those bulb leaves are working hard to store nutrients in the bulb for next year's flowers. If you cut foliage off now, the bulb may not reappear next spring. Leave foliage alone until it has turned completely yellow (and that means **no** braiding or tying it up). Not thrilled with the look of that yellowing foliage? Plant annuals between the bulbs and enjoy their display this summer.

## **Invasive Alert**

Garlic mustard is an invasive weed that chokes out native plants and spreads wildly. Look for its small white flower and light green leaves, in your garden and along streets and roadways. In early May, it pulls out easily. Bag it and send it to your transfer station to be incinerated.



*Garlic mustard pulls easily in early May.*



Early May is the right time for a second application of horticultural oil to manage pests on trees and shrubs (such as the aphids shown at left). Horticultural oil is not a pesticide—it works by smothering eggs so they cannot hatch

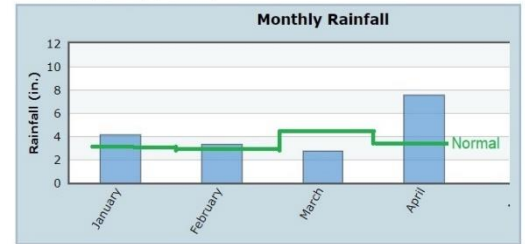


All the rain we received in April means some garden chores should be delayed until the soil dries out. If you find you are leaving impressions in the lawn or footprints in the garden, stop. Compacting soil is a bad idea because you are pushing out the air roots need to breathe (and yes, roots breathe) and preventing water from flowing through. It is very hard to get rid of footprints (or cart and tool tracks) once they have been made.

Plain brown cardboard (your Amazon boxes?) placed on the paths of your vegetable garden will reduce soil compaction and keep weeds from germinating in the aisles. The cardboard will break down by season's end and, as it does, it adds carbon to the soil.

Returns monthly totals for selected site and year.

Select Year: 2019 Submit



Month	Rainfall (in.)
January	4.10
February	3.26
March	2.67
April	7.57
May	0.23
YTD Total	17.83

Readings as of 5/4/2019 6:36 PM



Include herbs such as thyme, sage, oregano and dill in your vegetable garden and flower beds. Many herbs repel foraging animals. Dill attracts and is a host plant for a number of butterflies (like the black swallowtail shown above), so be prepared to sacrifice a branch or two of the vigorous plant to their caterpillars in exchange for their beauty. Thyme makes a great ground cover for hot dry area, especially on slopes where mowing may be tricky.



*Save those plain brown cardboard boxes to serve as paths through your vegetable garden*



**In the vegetable garden** When you thin beets, replant the seedlings. Unlike other root crops (e.g. carrots and turnips), they take well to the process. And as you harvest lettuce, start another patch for a late spring crop, growing it where it will be shaded later by taller or bushier companions. The lettuce will thank you as temperatures rise. Plant onions in triple rows. As they grow, remove the ones in the middle to use first, giving the others more room to grow.

May is the time to educate the deer and bunnies that your garden is not their cafeteria. Apply foul smelling sprays containing putrefied eggs and garlic oil. These sprays quickly lose their scent to human noses, but leave a bad taste in the mouths of those who try to eat them. Do not apply them to food crops!

