

In the Back Yard

April success tips brought to you by the Moraga Garden Center:

1. Plant ground cover now so plants will establish a strong root system before hot weather comes.
2. Plant an herb garden to add flavor to your cooking. Mint to garnish drinks, chamomile for a relaxing tea and catnip for kitty.
3. Fertilize plants you didn't last month.
4. Re-peat or replace loam as needed. There are new varieties of grass that use less water, stay greener and are more disease resistant than grass of just 5 years ago.
5. Apply iron to citrus and azaleas and other acid loving plants if the new leaves are yellow between the veins.
6. Terrace sloping yards to create an illusion of more space and greater depth. Terracing also helps reduce run-off and keeps soil in place.

April is right the time to prepare for your summer fiestas. Plant tomatoes now and enjoy home-grown, vine-ripened tomatoes this summer and fall! Use these tips for a bountiful crop and top quality fruit:

- Select several varieties to lengthen your harvest period, and to learn which ones taste the best and perform well in your garden. Be certain to try some Heirloom tomatoes.
- Choose a sunny spot – at least six hours of sun per day – and amend the soil with lots of Greenall Fir Mulch and add EB Stone organics Sure Start to give them a strong start.
- Unlike almost all other plants, plant tomatoes deep, about 2 inches deeper than in their original containers. Additional roots will form along the bared stem. Gently back-fill and firm up the soil around the stem. Form a basin around the plant for watering.
- Stake or cage the plants to keep the tomatoes off the ground. It's best to put these supports in when you plant, not later, so you won't disturb their roots.
- Irrigate the plant, water deeply, but not too often. Add mulch to help maintain a more even soil moisture level.
- Delicious home grown vegetables!

Growing your own vegetables is a healthy family activity, and there's nothing quite like eating home grown vegetables from your garden when harvest time arrives. No store bought vegetable, picked weeks before ripening, can match the flavor and tenderness of a vegetable picked at exactly the right



Chucho Torrente works for the Moraga Garden Center

moment! Seasonal vegetables to plant in mid to late April, as the weather warms, include tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, corn, chard, eggplant, squash, beets, carrots and radishes. Use the soil amendments and fertilizers mentioned above to produce more and larger vegetables.

Don't Deep Plant Trees!

Researchers at Texas A&M recently reported strong evidence that trees which are planted lower than their original container – as little as 3" inches deeper – suffer detrimental effects. Species in the study included sycamore, ash, crape myrtle, oliander and vitex, which were all planted either at the same depth they were in their containers, 3" below, or 3" above. Trees planted at the high level all had 100% survival and some grew faster than those planted at the same level. For trees planted deep, all species either had less than 100% survival, or grew more slowly than the other trees.



Chucho Torrente Tomato Plans at the Moraga Garden Center

By Sophie Braccini; information for this article was submitted by Dr. Wayne S. Moore and Frances Wilson for Moraga Gardens.



Dead Oak Tree of Pinehurst Rd, Canyon

Sudden Oak Death Hitting Our Trees

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Murakami recommends spraying healthy oaks with a dose of Agri-Fos, originally used as a fertilizer but which turned out to have the added benefit of preventing Sudden Oak Death in trees to which it had been applied. The Agri-Fos solution should be pumped and sprayed onto the trunk of the tree, from the ground up to about 8'. "Now is the time to do it," Murakami said. "Now, and again in October. It's a twice-a-year process."

And there is one drawback. "It's expensive," Murakami said. A half-gallon of Agri-Fos goes for about \$60, and while it must be diluted with water, the entire gallon should be used soon after it is mixed, so if you have neighbors with oak trees, collaboration might be in order. However, since the cost of removing a dead tree can run up to several thousands of dollars depending

on its size and location, prevention seems to be the more economical approach. Murakami is working on a quantity order for the preventive Agri-Fos solution to reduce the price to consumers.

Scudder said detecting oaks that are already diseased is difficult. One sure way to tell if your oak is doomed is to look for red-brown or amber ooze seeping out from seemingly healthy bark close to the soil line. Another sign is cankers that bleed a dark reddish discharge.

Scudder also emphasized that finding an aborist that will know your property is key to keeping it healthy.

"You have to have someone who knows your trees," he said. Good web sites to check out: www.suddenoakdeath.org, sponsored by UC California Berkeley www.sfpga.org – The Bob Scudder site that will lead you to everything.

Chris Lavin is a writer for the Lamorinda Weekly. She moved to Canyon from Oakland with her two small boys in 2004. She loves the Lamorinda area, where the weather is better and where everyone seems friendly and helpful.

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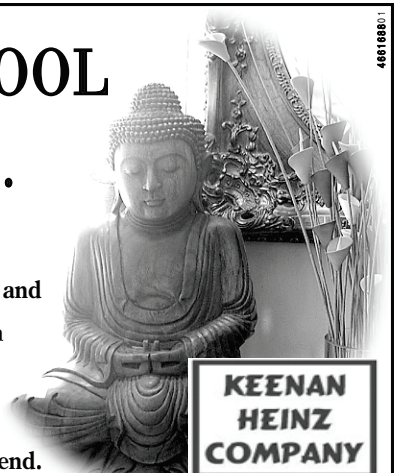
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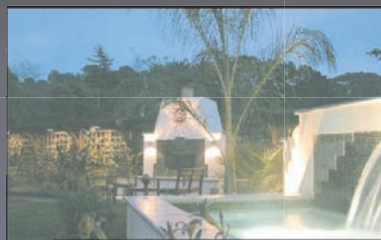
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