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**MAKE YOUR MEMORIAL DAY PLANTING A SUCCESS
WITH TIPS FROM GARDENING EXPERT MELINDA MYERS**
MEMORIAL DAY MARKS THE START OF THE GROWING SEASON FOR MANY

May 21, 2010 – Memorial Day weekend is the traditional start of the gardening season for many. It is the time families plant their vegetables, containers of flowers and spruce up their landscapes. “Make this year’s gardening season the best with a little planning and planting,” said gardening expert, TV host and author Melinda Myers. According to Myers, you can help your plants flourish and improve your overall gardening experience this Memorial Day weekend by following these simple steps:

- Take time to make a list. Just like grocery shopping it will help you focus on what you need and avoid spending money on sale plants or new beautiful plant varieties that will not fit in the space or growing conditions in your yard. “We all have spent money on these temptations and watched as they withered away in the pot or died a slow death when grown in the wrong conditions,” said Myers.
- Be prepared when you arrive at the garden center and allow plenty of time. It will be busy. Staff will just barely be trying to keep up checking out customers and loading vehicles while trying to help answer customers’ questions. And, be patient as all the carts may be in use and the aisles will be full of fellow gardeners. This is where your preplanning and list will make your visit go more smoothly. So take a deep breath and enjoy the excitement of the day.

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- Select healthy plants with deep green or appropriately colored leaves free of brown edges from drought stress. Check along the stems and undersides of the leaves. Avoid plants with brown spots, holes, or speckling that indicates insect or disease problems.
- Next, lightly brush over the plants. If a cloud of white, fly-like insects appear, leave the whitefly-infested plants on the rack. No need to spend money to bring home new problems.
- With transplants, bigger is not always better. Look for stout plants with sturdy stems. Overgrown and leggy transplants often take longer to root and get established.
- Plant your new plants in properly prepared soil. Adding a couple inches of organic matter and a slow-release low-nitrogen fertilizer if needed, will improve both sandy/rocky soils and heavy clay.
- Handle your transplants with care. Push on the sides of the container to loosen the roots and slide out the transplant. Gently massage the roots of potbound plants to encourage them to grow beyond their original rootball.
- Plant flowers and vegetables at the same depth they were growing in the container and cover the roots with soil, water and mulch. Tomatoes are the exception. Long leggy tomatoes can be planted deeper to encourage roots to form along the buried stem.
- Now comes the hard part. Pinch off the flowers. This allows the plant to put all its energy into forming roots instead of flowers and seeds. If you can't bring yourself to do this to every flower, try removing the flowers on every other plant or every other row. Your sacrifice will result in fuller plants and more flowers throughout the season.
- Be sure to water your new plantings thoroughly, so the top 4 to 6 inches are moist. Mulch with shredded leaves, evergreen needles or other organic material to keep the soil moist and help suppress weeds.

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- Check new plants and water as needed to keep the soil slightly moist. Gradually reduce the frequency, so you are watering thoroughly once a week in heavy soils and twice a week in sandy/rocky soils. Of course, you will need to adjust the schedule based on the weather and plants.

So, get your season off to a great start with a plan, trip to the garden center and proper planting.

If you'd like to schedule an interview with Melinda Myers to discuss this or other gardening topics, please contact Diana Paul at 414-771-1888 or dianapaul@wi.rr.com

Gardening expert Melinda Myers has 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including **Can't Miss Small Space Gardening**. She hosts the nationally syndicated "**Melinda's Garden Moment**" television segments which air on network TV stations throughout the U.S. and "**Great Lakes Gardener**" seen on **PBS** stations throughout the country. In 2010, Myers launched **Melinda's Garden Moments** for radio. Melinda also appears regularly as a guest expert on various national and local television and radio shows. She writes the twice monthly "**Gardeners' Questions**" newspaper column and is a contributing editor and columnist for **Birds & Blooms** magazine. Melinda has also been a contributing editor and columnist for **Backyard Living** magazine and has written articles for **Better Homes and Gardens** and **Fine Gardening** magazines. Additionally, she hosted "The Plant Doctor" radio program for over 20 years. Myers' web site is www.melindamyers.com.

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