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INSURE A BEAUTIFUL AND PRODUCTIVE GARDEN THIS SEASON

Strategies for Getting Quick Results from Your Garden

by Melinda Myers, gardening expert, TV & radio host and author

May 5, 2011 – Don't let our cold wet spring discourage you from gardening this season. A few easy gardening strategies can help you create and grow your way to a beautiful landscape and bountiful garden this season.

Give your garden a boost with proper soil preparation. Healthy soil is the foundation for a healthy and productive garden. Plants grown in properly prepared soil are better able to fend off pests and outgrow weeds.

Wait until the soil is moist, no longer wet and soggy, to dig, cultivate, and plant. Working wet soil destroys soil structure and results in clods, soil cracking, and compaction that you will be fighting all season and sometimes for years to come.

Incorporate organic matter into the top 6 to 12 inches of soil. Adding organic matter, such as activated compost full of microbial activity like [Purple Cow Organics](#), improves drainage in heavy clay soil and increases the water holding capacity in sandy and rocky soils.

Incorporate a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer like [Milorganite](#) in your tree, shrub, flower, and edible garden beds. The nutrients are slowly released throughout the season. Slow release organic nitrogen fertilizers are better for the plants and mean less work for you by eliminating the need for continual fertilization. Plus, when hot dry weather arrives later this season, and you know it will, the organic nitrogen stays in the soil until the weather improves and the plants need the nutrients. This eliminates the risk of burn.

You can also make up for lost time and help plants through the chilly nights ahead with season extending row covers, cloches, and wall-o-waters. These devices trap heat near the plants, helping to speed seed germination, plant growth, flowering, and fruit production.

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Floating row covers sold as ReeMay, Harvest Guard, and Grass Fast are polypropylene spun fabrics that let air, light and water through while trapping heat near the plants. Simply drape the fabric over the plants, leaving enough slack for plants to grow. Anchor the edges with wickets, stones, boards, or any heavy items in your shed or garage. As the plants grow, they support the fabric.

Remove the protection after day and night temperatures are suitable for the plants you are growing or when plants, like squash and melons, that need pollination, begin to bloom. You can leave the floating row covers in place on plants like cabbage, broccoli, and radish to prevent cabbage worms and root maggots from reaching the plants and causing damage.

So get busy planning and planting your way to a beautiful landscape and productive garden this spring!

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, TV host and author 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** segments which air on TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. She is a columnist and contributing editor for **Birds & Blooms** magazine, hosted "**The Plant Doctor**" radio program for over 20 years as well as **Great Lakes Gardener** on PBS. Melinda has a master's degree in horticulture, is a certified arborist and was a horticulture instructor with tenure. Myers' web site is www.melindamyers.com

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