



## May Love

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Greetings!

Welcome to the "merry" month of May. The month is starting out a tad gloomy with rain falling throughout the state. We are working full steam ahead despite the weather as we have no less than 7 truckloads of plants arriving in the next few days. All kinds of beautiful annuals are filling our benches just in time for you to gather a lovely collection of plants for your mom or grandmother or favorite aunt this weekend which is Mother's Day! Perennials galore are also arriving along with lots of hydrangeas, roses, irises, peonies, clematis vines, and other old fashioned favorites that your mom would love to see added to her

garden.



This Friday and Saturday Kassie and I are heading up to the Hill-Stead Museum May Market in Farmington. This is an annual event for us- we set up a tent on

the lawn and sell plants for two days. If you have never been, you should bring your mom up for a fun day this year. There are Morris Dancers, newborn lambs, museum tours, delicious food vendors, and tents filled with plants and crafts and gifts. The information about this May Market can be found below.



**Morris Dancers perform on the lawn at The Hill-Stead**

As I write this, I reflect back on decades of Mother's Days that I spent with my



mother. Her birthday is May 6th so Mother's Day was always the Sunday following. I would go up to West Hartford and clean up her flower garden in the front yard. Each year I would plant a rose bush and feed the rest of the roses and perennials that I had added over the years. I also planted a pretty pot of annuals for the back steps. We then had birthday cake and celebrated. How I miss those days that finally ended in 2007.

It is a lovely tradition for our customers to bring their mothers to Natureworks on Sunday. Many of our employees working on that day are also mothers. It is as special for them as it is for our visitors. We find families wandering through our gardens, taking pictures, sitting on the



**Every year I would plant a rose bush for my mom on Mother's Day.**

benches surrounding our peace pole, and relaxing while browsing our benches that are stuffed to overflowing with truly wonderful plants. We can have a gift certificate waiting for your mom- she will be so surprised and delighted! All moms who visit on Sunday can enter to win a beautiful hanging basket. You can also call in advance and order a garden basket filled with old fashioned perennials, organic herbs, or annual flowers that we will ceremoniously present to your mom when you arrive.



Lilacs and Scotch brooms are two flowering shrubs that always bloom on Mother's Day weekend. I have old fashioned lilac shrubs that reach my second floor bedroom window- heaven! I love to fill a vase with these intensely perfumed flowers. Last year I discovered what I consider to be the most fragrant lilac of all - 'Red Pixie. The flowers are a really deep, rose pink and smell amazing. The plant is compact, reaching only 6-7' tall and 6' wide. At the Hill-Stead May Market in 2015 we had people fighting over these plants!



Scotch brooms are another really fragrant shrub. They love hot sun and well drained soil. Being a legume (in the pea family) they do not need a lot of fertilizer. The more you cut them the fuller they grow. The stems are evergreen and I use them in arrangements during the winter

holidays.

Our native plant benches are filling up quickly. We have all sorts of precious wildflowers such as birdsfoot violets, Hepaticas, trilliums, and Virginia

bluebells. We have native shrubs such as elderberries, blueberries of all sizes, and Leucothoe which is great for your shade garden. For full sun we have nice Baptisias as well as Echinaceas, Rudbeckias, phloxes, and asters to name just a few. This week we are revealing a new native plant display for full sun, dramatically increasing our native plant offerings in the process.



The rain has created the perfect situation for seeding your lawn. I mentioned a few weeks ago that my husband is now in charge of our lawn. He has been dutifully studying Paul Tukey's book *The Organic Lawn Care Manual* and has yet to actually spread the compost and topsoil and put down the seed and straw in the many bare areas we have in our front yard. This is his week! He finally has asked me to bring the supplies home and Mother Nature is cooperating by supplying these deep soakings that will prepare the soil to accept the seed quite nicely.

**Have you ever walked in the woods in May and discovered a stand of Hepatica's in bloom?**



**Zinnias, cosmos, sunflowers, morning glories.. our warm season flower and veggie seeds have been restocked!**

Speaking of seeds, all kinds of seeds can be planted now. Some people pre-start warm season flowers such as zinnias and sunflowers in the house and plant them out at the end of May. I tend to direct sow them mid-month and beyond. By then I will be seeding into my veggie beds: beans, squashes, cucumbers, pumpkins, melons, and a lot more. We have restocked our seed racks and are ready for this next phase of planting.



Rain or no rain, spring continues merrily along. Don't let rainy days get you

down. Take advantage of them to come shopping! As this pattern of wet weather breaks, you will be totally ready and organized to get out in the garden and plant to your heart's content.

See you soon...

Nancy

P.S. We have just restocked our Repellex Systemic. This wonderful product will provide protection against voles, deer, squirrels, rabbits, and many other varmints for three months. It makes them taste like VERY hot pepper. It must be applied as the plants are growing, which is right now. I just applied it to my Phlox paniculata 'Blue Paradise' and a few of my more vulnerable shrubs in my "lower forty" that the deer have devoured in the past.

### Plants instead of Mulch!



**Polygonatum humile is miniature Solomon's seal ground cover that works well between shade perennials.**

If I spot a trend among my customers, clients, neighbors, and friends, I ALWAYS feel compelled to share it with you. In the past month, I can't even count the number of time people have said to me "I am sick of mulching over and over again, year after year. I want to have plants instead of mulch." My sentiments exactly! When I first started my gardens at home, I needed at least 20 yards of mulch each year to spread between my plants. Now, I use a mere 5 yards and that amount shrinks every year.



**When Diane presented me with this photo of native Stylophorum and explained how happy she was that it had spread because "it means less mulch, more plants" I realized there was a real trend here...**

This is also a HUGE trend in the books that I have been reading and studying. As an aging, very busy, and very tired gardener with nearly two acres to tend, I am eagerly soaking up any information on how to still have the plants I adore but make it easier on myself. The first thing I am doing is leaving a lot of stems up over the winter and then, in the spring, chopping them up and placing them



**We allow cranesbill geraniums to form ground covers beneath our roses and perennials in the Natureworks gardens. Double the color, double the beauty, and a lot less mulch.**

back around the plants. Next, if there are huge spaces between my plants, I am waiting to see if any self-sown plants come up. Voila! Right now I am spotting tons of breadseed poppies, borage, and Verbena bonariensis to name a few. Finally, any spaces left that are not filled by self seeders, I am filling with MORE PLANTS!

In my back yard, where I have a lot of ground to cover, I am using fast spreaders such as mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), asters, Helianthus 'Lemon Queen', culinary oregano, large leaf Ajugas. It is interesting to see which combinations really work well and which ones become unbalanced after a short period of time. This is an experiment in progress.



Above is one of my favorite native ground covers, *Chrysogonum virginicum* intermingled with *Sedum 'Angelina'* and *Brunnera*. No mulch here!

Roy Diblik, in his book 'The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden' said "There is no plant on earth, herbaceous or otherwise, that has any genetic knowledge of how to live amid an accumulation of wood," Hmmm.... Adding more plants makes the diversity in your garden so much greater. It's better for the butterflies, the pollinators, the hummingbirds, every creature that you share your yard with. Lessening the control, allowing plants to intermingle, observing the competition between plants and stepping back a little is a much more natural way to approach garden care.

## **THE GOOD BUGS ARE HERE!**



As organic gardeners, we do everything in our power to encourage the good bugs in our gardens. Good bugs? What?? Yes, there are many beneficial insects that are our allies in keeping the plants healthy. Most people know

ladybugs as the good guys. They eat aphids and LOTS of them. After this rainy spell is over and the sun comes out, the plants will be shooting out young, new growth and the aphids will have a field day. Enter the army of ladybugs, voracious aphid eaters. If you step back and let nature take it's course, you will be amazed. I NEVER spray for aphids. If they bother me and I can't wait for the beneficials, I just hose them off.

We carry lots of other beneficial insects and are committed to teaching you how to use them. The beneficial nematodes have arrived. We keep them in our refrigerator and right now, with all this rain, it's the PERFECT time to release them. They swim in the water in the soil and if it wasn't raining you would have to water the lawn first. They swim like heat seeking missiles in search of grubs. Yes! Green lacewings are much tinier and harder to spot but they also control lots of bad bugs in our gardens. Praying mantis egg cases are also available. They are fun for kids to watch emerge from their egg sacs and it is an ideal teaching opportunity to explain to children how nature works.

Come in and let us teach YOU all about the good bugs that you can introduce and nurture in your organic landscape.

**Bi-Weekly Special**  
**Thursday, May 5th**  
**through**  
**Wednesday, May 18th**

**20 % Off**  
**All Phlox**





All Phlox plants are on sale for the next two weeks. This is *Phlox subulata* 'Purple Beauty' in my garden.

That includes *Phlox subulata* (May pinks), native woodland *Phlox stolonifera* and *Phlox divaricata*, *Phlox glaberrima*, and summer blooming *Phlox maculata* and *paniculata* varieties in stock.

## Upcoming Events

**Friday, May 6th & Saturday, May 7th 10 am-4 pm**  
**HILL-STEAD MAY MARKET**  
**Hill-Stead Museum, 35 Mountain Road, Farmington CT.**



The Sunken Garden at the Hill-Stead Museum. Some of the

stone walls tower over my head! The lawn is filled with tents.

Vendors sell all kinds of plants, crafts, and gifts.

**Hill-Stead Museum celebrates the arrival of spring with May Market, its signature home, garden and gourmet benefit event featuring more than 65 artisan exhibitors and specialty plant vendors, as well as a Museum Open House with complimentary tours of the Museum at the May Market Open House. [Click here](#) for event details.**

**The Natureworks table will be located on the lawn. Be sure to stop by our spot at the May Market to see our fantastic display.**

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Sunday, May 8th is Mother's Day

**Treat your mom to a beautiful perennial or flowering shrub from Natureworks. Plant it for her and she will be even happier!**

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**Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> 8 am -7 pm, Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> 8am-6 pm, Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> 7 am-6 pm, Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup> 9 am-5 pm**

**ASK A VEGGIE HEAD! Vegetable Gardening Questions Answered all day long.**

This year we are introducing our Natureworks VEGGIE HEADS. The staff will don veggie hats of their own creation to keep everyone smiling during Veggie Pickup time. Got a question? Find the nearest VEGGIE HEAD and ask them! Sip refreshing cucumber water while shopping our organic vegetable seedlings.

## **Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup>**

>> 7:00-9:00 am

**Early Bird Sale** Coffee and a free \$5 gift card for those who shop before 9 am.

>> 9:30-10:30 am

**Growing the Best Tomatoes** In the middle of May, it's all about tomatoes. Nancy will share with you everything she knows about growing tomatoes including choosing varieties, planting methods, organic feeding, staking and training systems, and disease control.

## **Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**

5:00 - 6:00 pm

### **Have a Container Planting Party!**

Have you ever been to a Paint Night? This is like that, only we are "painting" with flowers! We invite groups to register for a Container Planting Party. Make it a fun night for you and your friends. We will host you, provide you with potting stations, organic potting soil and fertilizer, and help you to pick out your plants. Then we will guide you in arranging and planting your containers. You can bring your own containers from home or purchase them at Natureworks. Participants are welcome to B.Y.O.B. Herbal iced tea will be served.

**Registration** in advance is required: FEE: \$5 plus the cost of any plants and materials that you use. Class limited to 12 participants. If this class fills up quickly, we will schedule another one.

For the May Natureworks Events, [click here](#).

Unless otherwise noted, events are held on-site at Natureworks.



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## Hours

Monday - Saturday 8 am - 6 pm

Thursday our late night 8 am - 7 pm

Sunday 9 am - 5 pm



Natureworks Horticultural Services [\(map\)](#)

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