

Timing is an important part of gardening

By Sandy Fall

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They say the early bird gets the worm. But, the early gardener can wind up with frost-bitten plants.

For greater Northwest Ohio, the “frost-free” date is around May 15. That’s when we can be pretty much assured that we won’t get any cold nighttime temperatures that will harm your plants.

If your green thumb is itching to get going, there are a couple things you can do to prepare for the early and mid May planting. You can rake up and clean out your flower and vegetable beds. Make sure the ground soil is loose.

For container gardens, wash out your baskets and flower baskets to get rid of last year’s fertilizer salt.

If you really must get a jump start in planting, go ahead, but do it smart. For container gardens, be sure to bring your baskets and boxes inside, such as your garage, at night to protect them from cold temperatures and wind. In the morning, be sure to take your plants back outside to be sure they get enough sunshine.

If you can’t bring in your containers, then, in the evening protect and wrap them with newspapers, light cotton blankets or something else that will “breathe.” Don’t use plastic as it will not allow the plants to breathe and may trap in cold air.

For planting, cold crop vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower can withstand cooler night temperatures we still may get.

For flowers, pansies, snapdragons, dianthus and Dusty Miller are hearty breeds.

There’s also a line called Proven Winners that most greenhouses offer. These flowers can withstand temperatures as low as 27 degree Fahrenheit.

As always, your locally-owned Maumee Valley Grower is here to help you. Maumee Valley Growers best know the Northwest Ohio climate, soil and plants, and can offer additional guidance and advice to help make your garden grow.

You can also contact the Lucas County Extension Office with garden questions Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at 419-578-6783.

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Sandy Fall helps run the retail operation of Ohlman Farm & Greenhouse, 3901 Hill Ave., Toledo. Ohlman Farm & Greenhouse is under the fifth generation of ownership, and has operated its retail business since 1973. For questions or more information about Ohlman, call 419-535-5586.

The Maumee Valley Growers is an association consisting of 80 Northwest Ohio greenhouses. Members share best practices and other resources to improve their operations while also improving their products and services to assist gardeners. See www.maumeevalleygrowers.com.