

# Ten important steps to having a good garden

For crying out loud, this is the seventh week of these columns and I haven't even begged you to buy my book about gardening! Not once. However, tomorrow is the first day of spring and if you're ever going to need the book, it is now!

It's still only \$15 and available at numerous gift and garden related retailers around the area. It's called "The Gardener's Common Sense Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Midwest."

Indeed, spring is here. (I love that song, especially by Frank Sinatra.) If you haven't already done so, it's time to get a few things together in order to prepare to plant the backyard garden. And therein lies the



**kay melia**

• the gardener

reason why I brought up the subject of the book. The final chapter, beginning on page 208, consists of some information that many "first time" gardeners tell me is worth the price of the book. The chapter is entitled "Don't Do That" and lists the 10 most important steps to having a successful garden. Since we're getting close to planting time, I want to list those admonishments for you

today. Which of course means you won't have to buy the book in order to read the most important chapter. Here they are, in somewhat abbreviated form.

1. Don't choose a low lying area in your yard for your garden plot. Try to find an area of yard level with the rest of the yard. Not to do so will result in drainage problems all summer.

2. Don't plow or spade your garden plot when the ground is too wet. A wet plowed soil will cause clod problems all summer.

3. Don't plant a garden that will be larger than you can take care of.

Planting more than you have time to care for results in an abandoned garden plot.

4. Don't plant your garden too early. Tomorrow, the first day of spring is too early. Way too early. Wait another three weeks or so.

5. Don't plant your seed too thick. In this case, more is not better. Read the instructions on the seed packet. (or buy the book.)

6. Don't plant your seeds too deep in the soil. This may be the most serious mistake a gardener can make.

7. Don't move your transplants from house to garden without a "hardening off" period. This includes home grown or store bought plants. Get them accustomed to the great outdoors a few hours a day for several days.

8. Don't mulch your growing plants too early. Wait until the soil warms up, when the soil reaches a temperature of 65 to 70 degrees.

9. Don't water your growing plants too much or too often. When you water too often, the plant roots

tend to grow too shallow.

10. Don't plant the same varieties of vegetables every year. Try a new one. You might find something better than what you are now planting. Ask a friend or neighbor what variety they plant.

Those are the highlights of my 10 "Don't Do That's." In the book, there is much more detail about each step. These might be very helpful ideas for raising a successful and productive garden, especially for beginners.

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