

## PLANTING IN SUMMER

Summertime sun and heat can be stressful on plants, but it is the growing season and so they are better off in the ground than they are in a pot. The trick is to keep them as happy and stress-free as possible. Remember to wear your sunscreen and drink plenty of water when working outside in your garden in summer.

Make sure you have prepared your soil thoroughly before you begin. Soil preparation is the single most important step you can take to grow healthy, low maintenance plants. Our clay soils require the addition of organic matter in the form of compost, manure, or cover crops. Cover crops are plants grown from seed, which loosen the soil and improve its structure, protect topsoil from turning to dust in summer, and keep weeds down, adding nutrients. It is appropriate to use a summer cover crop like buckwheat to cover bare earth in preparation for planting in the fall. Watering is necessary to establish the seeds, but they are relatively drought tolerant once established. Seed is available in bulk from nurseries and farm stores. Cut down plants and leave to compost on the soil surface before the buckwheat goes to seed, or till it into the ground, wait a week or two until it breaks down, then you can plant. If seeding in late summer combine with hairy vetch or Austrian peas to provide continuous soil protection through the winter, then till in the spring when the soil is moist, but not saturated.

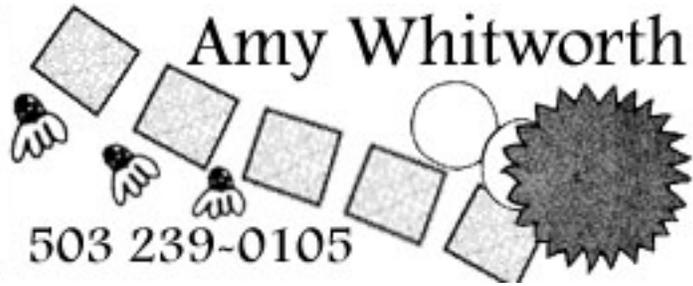
For more immediate results, water the soil for a few days before you begin to make it less dusty and easier to work. Let drain, then till lightly to break up the surface. Add 2"-3" of compost to the surface and till again, incorporating the organic matter. Lay another 2"-3" on the surface, and you are ready to plant. Make sure the soil is moist before you add the new plants. If it is dry below the surface, fill the planting hole with water and let it drain away. Repeat if the soil was really dry. This will provide a moist reservoir below the plants, making it easier for them to establish roots, and easier for you to water while they settle in.

When planting in summer, make sure your plants are as fully watered as they can be before you consider planting them in the ground. If you remove a plant from its pot and find it is not as wet as you thought, submerge it in a tub of water until it soaks up its fill, then you can plant it in the ground.

Take your well-watered plant and gently massage the roots so they no longer wrap around themselves in the shape of their pot, but are free to grow into the surrounding prepared soil. If the plant is particularly pot-bound, vertically score the sides of the root ball with a knife to a depth of approximately ¼" in 4 or 5 places around the perimeter, and break away the roots at the bottom.

Add some organic transplant fertilizer to the bottom of the hole, sprinkling some onto the surrounding backfill soil as well. Use the compost on the surface mixed with the native soil to backfill the hole. Tamp well, making sure there are no air holes, and the roots are all in contact with soil. Create a watering well around newly planted plants by mounding soil in a ring around the plant, and fill the well with water after planting and daily for the first week. Watch your newly planted plants closely for signs of stress, particularly on the hottest days.

**PLAN·IT  
EARTH  
DESIGN**



Top dress your new planting area with an additional layer of compost, then step back and watch those plants reward you with new growth and vigor!!

**FOR SUGGESTIONS ON PLANTS AND WHERE TO PLACE THEM, CONSULT YOUR GARDEN DESIGNER**