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Gardening Woes: Troubleshooting What's Going On

Effective Fire Ant Control: Which Old Wives' Tales Work and Which Ones Don't

Every gardener knows that fighting an ant invasion is an uphill battle at best. These colonies are at times invasive and stop at nothing to get to the food source they covet. With more than hundred thousand individual ants to one colony, it is no wonder that gardeners do not look favorably on these pests. Some are quick to point out that ants are indeed useful creatures, especially since they aerate the soil and also attack other insects, yet they can do just as much damage to gardens as they prevent.

Yet no ant has gotten as much bad press as the fire ant, especially the red imported fire ant. This species found its way from South America's Brazil to the North American continent at an Alabama port in the 1930s and has begun to wreak havoc in gardens and parks. While being a rather small species, the damage they do is severe:

Instead of a simple little hole or mound, these colonies take up a large surface area which they will defend intensely.

They damage crop seeds and the still small seedlings, which they use as a food source.

They attack small animals, which they kill and eat.

When threatened by humans, fire ants will attach the person, bite to get a good hold, and then inject toxic alkaloid venom that may be fatal to individuals who experience allergic reactions to it.

As you can see, effective fire ant control is a must, but there are many old wives' tales about cures and remedies that are designed to rid you of these nasty critters. Some of them actually work, while others will do nothing but aggravate the fire ants. Here is a list of the most famous old wives' tales and their effectiveness:

Use the garden hose to flood the nest and drown the queen. This rarely, if ever, works with the regular ants you know, and will also not work with fire ants. As a matter of fact, this act will be seen as an attack on the colony, and will result in a counter-attack. This is not a recommended method, since it will bring a large number of the stinging ants to the surface in search of the aggressor who attacked.

Spreading cornmeal around the mound will inhibit the fungi that many ant species feed on. This is good and well, but fire ants enjoy eating proteins which may be animal derived, so the loss of any fungi around the mound really will not have much influence on the growth and health of the colony, but instead may simply cause them to go a slightly larger distance to find their food source.

Flooding the nest with gasoline or lighter fluid and setting fire to it. While this may rid you of the fire ant colony, it may also rid you of surrounding vegetation, and – depending on weather conditions – your home. This is a highly dangerous undertaking, and is not recommended to the weekend gardener. Additionally, because of the damage you do to the soil, saturation with flammable substances should be carefully considered.

Spreading food-grade diatomaceous earth in your yard, and especially heavy concentrations around the fire ant mound. This method does not involve any destructive toxins, and is considered an organic method for decimating the fire ant population. It scratches and slices into the exoskeleton of the ants and causes them to die any time they come up to forage.

Orange oil sprayed on the ants will actually melt them. Using pure orange oil, not cleaners containing orange oil, dilute it to specification and then spray it on the ants. For more coverage, go ahead and pour a few gallons into the mound. This is now used by many commercial pest control companies who wish to go the more organic round and do not wish to spray poisons.

As you can see, effective fire ant control has left some folks so desperate that they are willing to try anything to get rid of these pests. Before taking some drastic measures, be sure to speak to an expert and do nothing that will endanger you, your family, or any pets or livestock you may have. A fire ant colony that has been stirred up and feels threatened is indeed a dangerous thing to have in your backyard.

Guidelines for Transplanting Trees

Transplanting trees is sometimes a necessary process, but it is fraught with difficulties even in the best situation. Understanding how to transplant trees is a necessary step in building the perfect landscaping environment.

One of the first things you must consider before you transplant a tree is whether or not you intend to move an established plant. If you do intend to move a plant that is established, you should plan at least a year in advance. Be sure to use a sharp edged shovel to sever the roots around the plant at least one year before you intend to start the process. You can do this by digging a cavity around the plant at least six feet from the center of the trunk. Fill it with moss. This will help the tree to prepare for the transplant process.

A few weeks before the actual transplant, the tree needs to be carefully pruned. Just before the transplant actually occurs, you need to dig a second cavity within twelve inches from the trunk of the tree. This should help you move the roots out of the ground. Pick the plant up (this might be easiest if you use something like a piece of wood for a bit of leverage), and set it on a material like burlap. Wrap the material around the root system, and slide the tree to a protected area. Let it sit for at least two weeks, but water it often. At this point, you can follow the general instructions for planting a tree as listed below.

If you intend to buy a tree, you are still transplanting a tree. You simply don't have to bother with the original excavation process yourself. Any tree that you purchase in a nursery setting

has been specially created for transplantation, using practices that researchers have shown to improve transplant success. The key to the best possible transplantation in this situation is to ensure that you are only choosing trees that are ready to be transplanted.

Choosing trees that are too young or are otherwise in poor health only makes for a bad idea and assured failure. The younger the plant you choose, the better transplant success you are likely to have, so be sure to chat with the nursery owner about the age of the tree you are about to purchase.

Once you have chosen a plant for transplant, you are ready to follow these steps for a perfect tree transplant. First, decide where you will place your tree. Keep in mind that different plants require different kinds of soil. Some grow well in dense soils. Others need a soil consistency with more air pockets to live well.

Do some reading about the kind of tree you intend to transplant, and make sure the soil in the transplant area is prepared for that kind of life. Moreover, make sure that you have enough soil in the chosen area to support a full sized tree. Remember that trees need quite a bit of space to spread their roots out, depending on the species, so choosing the perfect area is essential.

When you've chosen the perfect site, you also need to think about the season you intend to transplant the tree. This, again, depends on the plant species. For most trees, the perfect season is late summer or early fall, but extensive reading may be required to determine the exact requirements of your tree. When you dig the new hole for your tree, make sure it is at least two times larger than the ball of roots on the bottom of the tree. Be sure to water the hole before you add the tree, and give the tree as much depth as it had in its previous location.

If you have just purchased the tree, the sales specialist at your nursery should be able to give you this information. Once you've got the tree planted, water enough to keep the soil moist, but not so much as to drown the tree. Mulching around the tree, and adding a bit of fertilizer once a year is a good idea. Remember never to move a tree that is too large.

Pay close attention to these tips, and you, too, can have a successful tree transplant.

Identifying Common Diseases and Pests in Your Household Plants

Hobby gardeners do not limit their enthusiasm simply to the outside, but many have been known to take their passion inside the home as well. With a surge in the popularity of household plants, it is a small wonder that even gardening enthusiasts without a garden are now indulging their passion in the small indoors. Yet no hobby comes without its host of problems, and household plants are no exception.

There is a list of common diseases and even pests that may be found in your household plants, which require your attention lest they leave the plant unsightly, sick, and eventually dead. Additionally, some pests can become so annoying that they may require you to take further steps from keeping them from invading portions of your home.

Here is a list of common diseases and pests, and some easy way of identifying them:

Potassium deficiency in the plant's soil is a very common occurrence. It often happens when soil is being recycled, or low-grade soils, such as sandy or peaty soils, are used to pot a plant. The result is a plant that suffers from the deficiency and will display symptoms ranging from curling leaf tips to unsightly brown discolorations around the edges of the leaves. Adding specifically formulated potassium rich fertilizers will cure this deficiency and allows the plant to return to health.

Powdery mildew is the attack of a fungus onto the plant. A white powder will cover leaves, stems, and even blooms. Soil that has been recycled from another plant that suffered from this fungal attack is bound to contain spores that will also attack any other plant it comes near to. This fungus calls for a trip to the local garden supply store for some help in securing a solution that will eradicate the fungus, since –left to its own devices—will attach itself to whatever plants are near the infected one.

Another fungus that will attack primarily roses is the black spot disease. Easily recognizable by the black spots that form on rose leaves; this disease needs to be treated quickly before it spreads to the entire plant. In order to protect your potted plant, be sure to remove all fallen leaves, clip off the ones that show evidence of advanced black spot disease, and treat the rest of the plant with a fungicide you will be able to purchase at the local garden supply store.

Root rot also is a fungus, yet since it lives and thrives in the soil; it is much harder to get rid of than the topical fungus that can be removed from leaves. While there may be some antifungal solutions that can be added to the soil, in general by the time it is recognized it is too late to save the plant from demise. Prevention, in this case, is best, and one good step is to use potting soil that is rich in compost or manure components, as these inhibit the growth of this fungus. Recycling potting soil from another plant or taking garden soil may add to the problem.

Aphids are one of the pests that can affect household plants. Sucking the sap from within the plant, they sometimes will transfer plant viruses to their host plant and thus kill it. Let unchecked, the aphids will soon reproduce and take over the plant, leaving it unsightly and dying.

While ladybugs are a known killer of aphids, many hobby gardeners do not wish to specifically introduce insects into their homes, no matter how beneficial they may be, and thus you may need to go the chemical route to rid your plant of the aphids. Removing the aphids you can see by hand, and then spraying the plant with a diluted soap mix is perhaps an organic first step of aphid control.

Whiteflies are another pest, which is often found on the underside of leaves. Similar to aphids, these insects suck out the plant's sap, while exposing the plant to a toxin within their saliva. Because of an overuse of pesticides in the past, these animals have a high tolerance to toxins, and more organic methods and hands on methods are required to bring this infestation under control and to keep your houseplant from dying.

Spraying the underside of the leaves with a diluted mix of soap and water and then sponging off as many of the flies as possible is one solution, while hanging sticky traps around the plant and frequently disturbing the leaves is another.

Over-Watering and Other Accidental Houseplant Deaths

Houseplants are wonderful additions to any home. They may grace bookshelves, windowsills, or stand alone on end-tables. Offices have long since known that indoor plants make for a relaxing environment, and it is therefore not surprising that many an office sports several varieties of these plants, some big, some small, to add decoration as well as calmness to an otherwise busy surrounding.

While growing plants indoors is not supposed to be a hard undertaking, there are several factors that need to be considered. First and foremost, the plant needs to receive adequate light. Next in line is adequate watering, fertilization, and also soil mix for a healthy root system. Additionally, some houseplants will require regular pruning while others may not be as picky. Pests, such as white flies, or fungi are also threats to a houseplant and need to be dealt with quickly and directly.

It is not surprising that some houseplants have gone to that great garden in the sky under the care of even the most diligent gardeners. Over-watering and several other accidental houseplant deaths are actually more common than you think. Here is a list of the most common ones and some suggestions as to how to avoid them from happening to your houseplant:

Over-watering is quite possibly the number one reason for houseplant death. Before happily and frequently watering your plant, be sure to check about the species-specific needs it may have. Some plants like a lot of water, while others do not. While the average houseplant does not need to be watered more often than once every five days or so, there are always exceptions to this rule, and therefore prior to watering you might want to check the soil to make sure it is not still saturated from the last time you watered.

Under watering must rate as the number two reasons for accidental plant death. How often did you forget when it was the last time you watered your plant? How often did you ask your spouse or child to water and then did not check with them to make sure it actually happened? It is a good idea to check on your houseplant every three days or so to make sure the soil is not bone dry to the touch.

Inadequate soil is another reason why many houseplants do not survive long. Depending on the species of plant, it is imperative to purchase the proper potting soil. Cacti, for example, need a decidedly different kind of soil than your indoor fern.

Commercially available potting soil mixes should be used whenever possible. Try to stay away from your garden soil, or from recycling soil from another plant. Additionally, do not use topsoil, since it does not have the nutrients that are available in potting soil.

Fungi will quickly make your plant an unsightly spectacle, and more often than not they will kill it. These can sometimes be avoided by not using soil from your garden when potting a plant. Spores survive in the soil for long periods of time, and they will quickly sprout and attack your new houseplant. If you do see a fungus infection on your, be sure to quickly consult with your local garden center for remedies to cure your plant and its soil.

Temperature extremes will surely kill many plants, or at least stunt their growth considerably. Do not place your houseplants on top of your heaters, or allow leaves to touch windows that regularly frost over. Do not put your plant in front of a fan or next to the stove. Some plants, however, enjoy the moisture that a bathroom will offer, such as ferns, and placing a plant in such an environment is appropriate.

The use of inappropriate fertilizers is next on the list of plant hazards. Over-fertilizing will kill your plant more quickly than not fertilizing it at all, and it is best to use a fertilizer specially formulated for houseplants.

It is evident that the addition of houseplants to any environment are a wonderful choice, and if you follow a few simple steps, you can avoid over-watering, or a host of other accidental houseplant deaths. Your leafy companions will thank you for your care!

Popular Deer Proofing Methods for Your Garden

You are familiar with deer as the majestic animals that gracefully walk across the wooded ridges and generally try to stay away from people. If you have children, you know Bambi and perhaps you even share your child's love for this little fawn and its trials and tribulations. Drivers know of the dangers that encountering a deer in the middle of the road at night or at dusk may bring with them.

Deer are herbivores, which mean that they are entirely vegetarian. Because their teeth have specially designed enamel ridges, they are able to grind a variety of plants and leaves, thereby making them exceedingly well adapted to forage in a number of different locations, no matter what the indigenous vegetation may be.

Yet unlike other grazing animals, such as sheep for example, deer are not content with grazing, but instead seek out the more nutritious leaves, plant shoots, twigs, fruits, and tender plants. What makes deer such incredible pests to the gardeners is their propensity for only taking one or two bites off a plant before moving on to the next one. This causes a widespread damage to the entire garden that is not limited to only a few species of plants or trees.

As a gardener you may now be wondering what you can do to get those graceful creatures to move on and leave your garden in peace. While some may welcome this problem as an opportunity to replenish their venison supply in the refrigerator, others do not wish to harm these beautiful creatures.

For those in the latter category, there are a number of remedies, some of which sound a bit far-fetched, that some folks will swear by. While there does not appear to be a tried and true

method that will control your particular deer problem at a level of one-hundred percent, the remedies are so varied and inexpensive, that one is bound to work on your specific herd of invaders and aid you in deer-proofing your yard.

Many swear by the use of cayenne pepper around the perimeter of the portion of your property you wish to protect. Be sure to use fresh cayenne pepper, and not the stuff that has been languishing in the back of your pantry since purchasing the spice rack thirteen years ago. Odds are that by now it has lost much of its pungency and therefore also effectiveness. Be sure to reapply the cayenne pepper after extensive watering and rainfall.

Applying a single strand of strong fishing line around the portion of your garden you wish to protect is said to confuse deer to such an extent that they will move on, since they do not seem to be able to figure out what causes the invisible barrier. Of course, others have reported that this has led to deer actually attempting to jump over the invisible barrier, doing more damage to plants by trampling them in the process.

Deer have an extreme dislike for mint and sage, and inter-planting these herbs with your flowers may discourage deer from continuing to forage on your property.

Another method of deterring deer is to spread goat urine, but this might be hard to come by unless your next-door neighbor happens to raise goats.

Substances, such as "Liquid Fence Deer Repellent" may be sprayed on surfaces most likely to be chewed by deer. Success is said to be rather high, but only if the substance is reapplied at least every two weeks.

Prune lower branches of trees that might attract deer.

Some swear by a substance known as blood meal which may be bought at gardening supply stores and which is said to frighten deer away. Others report that the deer appear to be unimpressed by the substance and continue their foraging.

If the damage is so widespread that you will have to replant your yard, consider using deer-resistant plants. While no plant is completely deer-resistant in the face of a starving herd, there are a number of plants that will convince deer to move on and look for vittles elsewhere.

Amongst them are spruces, junipers, pines, rhododendron, hydrangea, ferns, ivy, echinacea, iris, lupines, and many others. Your neighborhood nursery should be able to give you more information on the kinds of shrubs, trees, and flowers that will grow in your area. Additionally, most deer resistant plants are also labeled thusly.

Slugs and Snails and Other Gardening Tales – How to Get Rid of These Slimy Little Suckers

Gardening is perhaps one of the most enjoyable activities on the planet. Your hours of hard outdoor work can produce something so beautiful, it is impossible to describe in words. Poets

have spent hundreds of years trying to sum up the beauty found in gardens with mere words, but with any good garden, there are simply too many sights to describe with the human creation of language.

All sorts of pests, though, can quickly ruin gardens. Two of the worst kinds of pests you might have in your garden are slugs and snails. Not only do these creatures look disgusting and leave slimy, yucky trails over every place they travel, they also do serious harm to your garden.

Slugs and snails live to eat green and decaying plant matter. They will chew holes in your prize hostas, irreparably damage your young citrus trees, and make your entire strawberry crop inedible. Getting rid of these tiny pests may be more difficult than it seems, though.

Scientifically speaking, snails and slugs are fairly similar creatures. They both are a part of the mollusk phylum.

They move with the help of a "foot" made of muscles. This is what creates the slimy trail that may lead you to believe you have a snail and slug problem. As the creatures move, the muscled foot leaves mucus behind, allowing the body to move easier. All slugs and snails can lay eggs, as they are hermaphrodites. Snails can lay eighty eggs at a time, though it can take a snail two years to reach maturity.

Slugs mature much quicker, usually within six months depending on what species they belong to. Once they reach maturity, it is possible for them to lay up to forty eggs at any given time. The chances are good that you won't see a snail during the day, as they are only active when the sun is not present. The heat and light damages their bodies, so they spend most of the day hiding. They hibernate throughout the winter. This understanding of slugs as creatures may help to give you a better idea of how to rid your garden of these nasty pests.

There are essentially two ways to get rid of snails and slugs in the garden. The first way to rid yourself of this horribly plague is through the use of chemicals. Many lawn and garden stores carry a variety of chemicals that will help you get rid of the slugs and snails in your garden. These chemicals come in a number of different forms.

You can buy slug and snail pellets, meal, powder, and liquid. These can be sprinkled or sprayed in and around your garden to get rid of the problem entirely. Moreover, you may be able to purchase pre-made traps for the little critters to keep them from returning later in the season. The use of chemicals, though, is problematic on a couple of levels.

First, if you're concerned about these pests in your vegetable garden, it is essential to remember that you will be eating the fruits and vegetables you are spraying chemicals on. This can mean some fairly extensive washing procedures when you get ready to eat the produce. If you don't get them properly washed, you could face illness or food poisoning.

Second, the chances are quite good that small children or pets may be in and around your garden at some point. If this is the case, and you choose to use chemical methods to remove the slugs and snails from your garden, you must be extra cautious. Reading the label to the chemical product you have chosen is a must. These are dangerous products that could kill your pet or a small child.

Moreover, pesticides are created to be poisons. As a result, they can contaminate water supplies. If you live near a creek, river, or lake, it's just not a good idea to use pesticides in your garden.

If you need a chemical alternative to get rid of the slugs and snails in your garden, there are many at your disposal. In order to create the best pest management system, you will need to employ a combination of methods. First, keep your garden weeded regularly. Second, be sure that you leave all decaying material out of your garden. It may make great mulch, but it is a haven for the slugs and snails you are struggling to get rid of.

Be sure you get rid of any junk that lies in and around your garden. Lots of things are home to slugs and snails including old boards, flowerpots, and rocks. Be sure to destroy any slugs you see while you are working in your garden. Destroying their eggs would be a good step as well. There are a couple of ways to attract and kill slugs when you're not in the garden.

Place several small, round dishes of stale beer in and around your garden. This will attract the slugs, and when they go to drink it, they will drown. If you don't want to use beer or you don't have any nearby, you can also use grape juice or a tea made from yeast, water, and honey to the same end.

Keeping the slugs out isn't difficult. It's just a matter of finding the right methods.

Step by Step Guide to Diagnosing Pesky Pests in Your Garden

Imagine your summer garden for just a moment. Think about the beautiful flowers, the full, green hostas, the perfect butterfly bushes, the tasty summer vegetables, and the bugs that keep eating everything you plant. Bugs? This is the single most common problem home gardeners face during the spring and summer growing season. There are so many terrible little pests that may decide to feed on your garden; it can be difficult to know which pests you have and how to kill the pests so your garden will have the look you desire.

Diagnosing your pest problem is the first step to taking back your garden. While many lawn and garden companies offer a free pest analysis, the cost of the analysis is often dependent upon your willingness to sign a long term, expensive contract with the company, so working with a lawn and garden company to deal with your little pest problem may not be the best idea in the world.

However, if you feel uncomfortable with the research or you just don't think you can handle killing those tiny little creatures who are destroying your perfect garden world, perhaps a lawn and garden company is the best step. If nothing else, you will get the peace of mind from seeing that someone is taking care of the problem for you. If, however, you decide to go it alone, there are several steps you need to take in diagnosing your lawn's pest problem.

One of the first things you must do in this long process is decide what kinds of problems you are experiencing in your garden. Are there holes in the plants? Are particular plants dying back without a good reason? Do you have flying insects when you go out to work in your garden?

Understanding the answers to these questions will help you to get a good handle on what's going on with your garden area.

Once you've identified your primary results from the pest problem, the next step in the process is to start thinking about what kinds of pests may live in your area, and may be invading your garden. There are a number of ways to do this, but one of the first is to do a bit of regional research. Your local department of conservation office may be able to help in this regard, as may your local library or some type of regional pest information website.

Remember that pests vary by location and region, so just because your sister's hosta was turning brown and dying back because of one particular insect variety a hundred miles away from your home, the chances are quite good that you have a very different kind of pest problem all together.

When you have completed your research, it's time to do a bit more detective work in the garden area. Get down on your hands and knees. Dig in the dirt in and around your plants. See what kinds of insects are living in your garden. Physically seeing the insects will better help you to identify the, which will help you to treat them better.

Once you figure out what they are, you are ready to find out what kills them to save your garden. If, however, you can't figure out what they are, there are a number of companies who will allow you to send them insect samples, and, for a fee, they will help you diagnose your garden problem, putting you on the path to success.

There are several fairly common garden pests with fairly common remedies. Aphids are terrible on your garden. These tiny creatures will, quite literally, eat your entire garden, and there are a few good ways to get rid of them. First, your lawn and garden store probably carries chemicals that will help you deal with the problem. However, releasing ladybugs into your garden will take care of the problem quite quickly. Slugs are other fairly common garden pests, and some careful clean up and chemical treatment is the best way to get rid of these little guys.

Garden pests are a hassle, but doing your research will help you to diagnose the problem and get rid of it so you can begin enjoying your garden again.

You've Got a Mole in Your Garden – Tips on Moving Them Out for Good

Moles are little mammals that are known for their subterranean living as well as their insect eating qualities. In children's literature as well as in movies made for young children, moles are portrayed as being blind, lovable, and quite often misunderstood because of their love for the dark. The reality, of course, is a bit different, especially for the gardener who suddenly finds evidence of mole activity in her or his garden.

Moles' main dietary staples are earthworms and grubs, the first of which gardeners cherish for the compost they produce. Additionally, because of their constant digging, soil will be flung far and wide, quite often smothering young plants. Add to this the uprooting of recently planted flowers and vegetables, as well as the animals that use mole tunnels to traverse the

underground and feed on your plants, and it is easy to understand why a sudden mole sighting may be of great concern to any gardener.

While those who seek to rehabilitate the reputation of the mole quickly point out that the tunnels have an aerating effect on the soil, detractors are equally as quick to cite the danger of catching a foot in a mole hole and twisting an ankle, or simply because of the unsightly molehills that soon grace the entire garden's landscape.

If you suddenly find your garden under attack by these little critters, what should you do? Is there a way to move out these moles for good or will you be stuck with them? Will you have to go the route of toxic substances and keep children and pets indoors until you are sure of the moles' demise, or are there more earth friendly ways of hastening their departure? Here are some tips and tricks for removing those little pests from your yard:

If you are out to kill the little pests, you can go ahead and flood the tunnels with water from your garden hose. You may be able to drown them that way, although there is no guarantee that you get them all.

Similarly, you could flood the tunnels with the exhaust of your lawn mower or other gas-guzzling device, but the success level is once again not guaranteed.

Some folks have taken to dropping poison, such as strychnine laced food and other items down the holes, but the danger of accidentally poisoning your pets or children is far greater than the perceived benefit of ridding your lawn of its uninvited inhabitants.

Organic gardeners in particular stay away from poisons, and those folks will be happy to know that there is a substance that can be spread onto the lawn and watered in. While it will not kill the little critters, it will make the soil so unpalatable and your yard so uninhabitable, that they will soon pack up and leave.

This magic substance is sold in the gardening store as "castor oil granules" and can be spread with a regular hand-spreader as you would use for garden seeds or fertilizer. Completely non-toxic to man and beast alike, the moles nonetheless detest the smell and taste of anything that these pellets touch, and upon application of this substance they can soon be seen leaving the property behind. Since they may only go as far as your neighbor's yard, it is a good idea to periodically reapply these granules to prevent any re-infestation.

For a more hands-on approach, there are traps available – both lethal and humane – that will allow you to either dispose your moles into the hereafter, or to relocate them to another location far away from your yard.

To prevent moles from seeing your yard as a desirable property, it is also highly recommended to do away with the grubs that the moles so love to eat. Your local garden supply store will have several substances, which will reduce and eliminate the amount of grubs in your soil, namely nematodes and milky spore bacteria.

As you can see, moles are not a scourge that will soon take over your yard and bar you from the fruits of your labor and the enjoyment of your property. Similarly, a sudden infestation does not mean that you have to resort to chemical warfare at the expense of your pet's health, or child's safety. So go ahead and try the organic methods first, and be amazed how quickly those moles will be leaving you alone!

Divide and Conquer: How to Split up Your Ferns Without Harming Them

Ferns, by aficionados also known as pteridophytes, have a unique setup in the plant world. Their underground root system is often called that of rhizomes, since they not only form the horizontal part of the fern's stem, but also serve to spread the plants via vegetative multiplication.

Gardeners have long since coveted these wonderful plants since they grow big very easily and seem to take over whatever spot they are planted in, if you live in a semi-tropical zone. Of course, they also make wonderful additions to hanging pots, or even for indoor plants they are very beautiful.

Yet the fern enthusiast needs to be aware that eventually a fern will become root-bound. This simply means that the root system has pretty much taken over whatever space there was in the flower pot, and is now in desperate need of a new, larger home.

If you find that your fern has outgrown its pot, there are some great ways to either re-pot or split up your fern without harming it.

First and foremost take the plant out of its pot gently. If it appears that you have waited too long to repot, and the roots have already grown out of the bottom holes of the pot, and may have even proceeded to knot together outside the holes, you may have to cut the pot open, assuming that it is plastic.

Once you have successfully extricated the roots from the pot, you will need to very carefully divide the roots. Use a very sharp knife to cut into the root ball so as to minimize any damage from accidental ripping of roots.

Now that you have the roots cut apart, be sure to very gently separate the fronds above. This may take a little bit of work since they may have become quite tangled. Your patience, however, will be rewarded with two beautiful plants.

These two plants need to be immediately planted to continue thriving. Be sure to invest some flower pots adequate for the size of the root balls you have now. Additionally, a good potting soil should be used whenever repotting a plant. Do not use topsoil, since it is somewhat lacking in nutrients for plants. Instead, go ahead and purchase one of the commercially available blends of potting soil.

If you want to do your ferns a special favor, you may want to add some of the white pellets that you can find at a good gardening store. They sell under the name "perlite" and are very useful in improving the soils drainage.

Once your ferns are planted, give them a good watering and maybe even a misting, since this is a rare treat that ferns most certainly enjoy. Wait at least a few weeks before applying any fertilizers.

As you can see, dividing your fern is not that hard of a process, if you simply keep a few cardinal rules in mind. Of course, there is also a list of things you should avoid- if at all possible- to give you plants the best possible start in their new separate lives:

Please be sure to cut the root ball. Some gardeners can be seen ripping them apart, but the damage this creates in the plants is very traumatic, and some ferns, which are thusly separated, will not thrive but instead may simply die.

Do not wait too long to separate your fern. Once it is root-bound, which simply means that it has been in the pot too long and has since outgrown it, it is very hard to effectively separate the roots.

Do not buy the cheapest soil available, but instead invest in a bona fide potting soil. While to some folks dirt is just dirt, to a soil connoisseur, to which you could count your ferns, there are subtle and glaring differences, such as soil drainage, nutrients available, and also moisture content.

Do not over- or underwater the plant. It should not be bone dry, nor should it be sitting in soggy soil.

Do not place your plants into the glaring sun. Instead, give them some bright yet indirect light.

And, last but not least, do not immediately fertilize your divided plants, but give them a few weeks to have the roots heal up. Fertilizing them too early will result in burning.

Gardening in Basic Black: A Quickie Guide to Black Plants

Plants come in a variety of shapes, sizes and also colors. Gardeners have long since capitalized on this cornucopia of variations, and have succeeded in creating breath-taking displays that show off the plants and their surroundings in the most favorable lights possible. Yet more and more serious gardeners are taking advantage of a kind of color that is not usually associated with a thriving, vibrant garden setting: black!

As a matter of fact, there are a wide variety of black and almost black plants out there that would do wonderfully in your garden. There are, of course some limitations you will want to keep in mind to keep your garden still the luscious enjoyable piece of nature that it is. Here is a very basic quickie guide to black plants:

Introduce black plants into your garden after careful consideration and planning. Think of them as that little black dress that so favorably shows off your skin coloring, hair color, eyes, and bracelet. If you overdo the black, you will drown out the effect you are looking for, whereas a planned planting of black plants will be a great way to showcase your bright reds, blues, yellows, and other colors.

Additionally, a clustering of black plants will likely have the effect of creating a hole in your landscape, while pairing them with bright orange flowers will create a seasonal effect you may appreciate in October, but not necessarily in July.

Keep in mind that not all plants that are sold as being black plants are actually black. Some may only be a very dark shade of red or maybe purple. Do not be surprised if the color lightens a bit with time, but instead be sure to ask your trusted nursery worker if the plant you are purchasing is an authentic black or if it is a deep red or purple, and plan your other flowers in the vicinity to go with that color, just in case your black plant lightens a little bit.

Be prepared to spend a little extra money. While more and more gardeners have come to like the idea of using black plants in their landscaping, their supply is still outdone by their demand, and so prices are a bit higher than those of other plants. Also consider that plants named "Dark Vader", which is a member of the iris family, and similar plant names that may be closely associated with (or related to) popular movie and television characters will be more costly than their humbly named counterparts.

When incorporating your black plants into the landscape, be sure to consider their unique needs. Due to their color, they have less chlorophyll than green plants, and therefore need to have the premium spots in bright sun. If you plant black plants in shady spots, they will appear to create black holes in your landscaping that no amount of bright flowers around them will be able to cure. Be aware of their unique watering needs as well. To prevent them from withering and dying in the heat of a bright sunny spot, be sure to adequately water your black plants, and in the cool of the evening to also mist them a little.

Specific plants that have been bred to have the black color are the "Black Parrot" and "Queen of the Night" varieties of the tulip plants, the "Black Magic Rose" variety of geraniums with its all black foliage, the "Black Gem" cornflower, "William Guinness" columbine, "Black Prince" daylily, "Bishop Llandaff" dahlia, as well as the "Black Pearl" and "Midnight Eclipse" calla lilies. There are many more different varieties of plants that are also black, but these are the most famous and common.

Of course, did you know that black plants will not only serve to show off your landscape, but will add their dramatic effects to a variety of other settings? Consider using them in planters to accentuate silver or white plants. Use them indoors as potted plants to offset the effect of a light colored wall. Of course, their fantastic effects do not end there. Think of terrariums, which will greatly benefit of the dark backdrop to showcase the brilliant shimmer of the beetles, amphibians, or reptiles you keep within.

How to Extend the Life of Your Perennials

Working with a perennial garden can be one of the most rewarding experiences ever. The simple beauty of these plants and flowers is enough to make any person take a step back to truly admire the beauty that is life. It is a nice change of pace from the frantic lives we tend to lead on a regular basis.

However, a perennial garden can also be a bit of a hassle at times. It requires constant maintenance and replanting. As a result, many people shy away from the concept, fearing the hard work. There are a few ways, though, to extend the life of your perennials with your regular garden upkeep, taking the replanting off of today's to-do list.

One of the first things you should do if you want to extend the life of your perennials is careful yearly pruning. While cutting a plant may not seem like the best way to extend its life, it will in fact make your garden look exceptional and keep the upkeep to a minimum for you. When you think of pruning, you may think of the trimming you do to your trees each fall and spring.

Don't get out those giant clippers just yet, though. Pruning in a perennial garden has a few other meanings. There are several ways to prune your garden. One of the first ways to prune is by deadheading on a regular basis. Deadheading is the process of getting rid of old blooms by pinching them off of the plant. Sometimes this may be a bit more involved than others. For example, in a number of cases, deadheading may include removing an entire flower stalk. Just be sure that when you begin to engage in deadheading, you remove down to the new bud, otherwise you may be taking too little or too much off of the plant.

Cutting back is another way to prune your flowers. Cutting back should be done any time deadheading isn't appropriate. For example, you may choose to cut back an entire section of a perennial, even the stalks and new blooms, if the plant isn't growing properly. This can help to encourage new growth. Pinching is another way to prune your perennials. Pinching involves getting rid of the tips and new leaves to keep a plant from getting too big.

Thinning is another way to prune your plants. Thinning involves getting rid of particular stems to maintain a plant's size or shape. You may also need to disbud during the pruning process. This will help you to control the flower growth. You may want to decide where you want the flowers to occur on a particular plant to enhance the look of your garden, and disbudding can help you to control this. Dead leafing is also an important form of pruning. Getting rid of old dry leaves can help to encourage new growth.

Besides pruning, there are several other ways to extend the life of your perennials. One way is by checking the soil pH on a regular basis. This procedure is typically done in the fall, and it will help to ensure that you have the right kind of soil to continue growing the kinds of plants you like. If you find that your soil pH is off a bit, you may want to add certain types of fertilizers to change the balance back to your favor. Consulting a local lawn and garden company may also be helpful in this particular matter.

Be sure, as you add new plants to your garden, to stagger the times they bloom. When perennials bloom, they take up extra energy from the soil. As a result, you can extend the life

span of your perennials by making sure you don't have too many things blooming in your garden at any one given time.

One final step in keeping your perennials lifespan where it should be is insect control. Several kinds of rather nasty insects can prey on your garden, and ensuring that you have a good insect control method in place will help to extend the life of all of the plants in your garden.

Gardens can be a beautiful place for rest and relaxation if you aren't constantly adding new plants. Consider these methods, and the life of your plants will be greatly increased.

Is Growing Tropical Plants a Possibility in Cold Climates?

Many a hobby gardener is wooed by the cornucopia of colors and scents that tropical flowers and even shrubs give off. They are deliciously different, and so it is not surprise that many vie for an opportunity to include specimen of this beautiful flora in their landscape or indoor gardens. Unfortunately, many hobby gardeners stand by helplessly as the gorgeous blooms begin to droop and plants simply appear to wither away. After all, tropical plants cannot possibly grow in cold climates, can they?

Plants that are native to the tropical portions of the world are usually accustomed to a tropical climate, which consists of warm temperatures year round. In addition to the warmth that is so quickly associated with the tropical climate, there is the moisture, which also appears to be year round. For this reason, many hobby gardeners have adopted the following tips and tricks to successfully growing tropical plants in decidedly non-tropical climates:

Buy carefully from reputable dealers. Sometimes, this might mean purchasing your plants over the Internet and via mail order. While many garden supply stores may have beautiful specimens for sale, keep in mind that oftentimes they are primed to look appealing, and may not be as healthy as you would expect.

How often would you purchase a plant that has roots hanging out of its container? Yet this is exactly the way an orchid, for example, ought to be purchased! Do your homework on the telltale signs of a healthy plant and do not be afraid to sniff the soil, look at the underside of leaves, or even move a little topsoil around while looking for mold or moss.

Consider growing the plant in a container. Depending on your climate zone, you want the plant to be easily movable to protect it from winter weather, storms, heavy rainfall, and any other natural peril that may destroy it.

Evaluate your environment. Because of the need for a lot of humidity and sunlight, hobby gardeners tend to leave their tropical plants in full sunlight and over-water regularly. The result is a plant that is burnt on top, and rotting from the bottom. While it is true that tropical plants may be able to stand a lot of sunlight, they also need some shade, and some species burn quickly and easily.

Usually, twelve to fourteen hours of sunlight (not direct, scorching desert sun) are required to allow the plant to grow and produce its flowers. If you are keeping your plants primarily inside, you may wish to invest in some growing lights that will keep your tropical plants happy. Additionally, while moisture is of great concern, these plants do not like to get "wet feet" and therefore standing water should be avoided. Instead, water them often, but allow the excess water to drain away. You may wish to invest in a spray bottle that you can turn to "mist" to frequently mist your plants.

If you live in extremely cold climates yet still wish to have the beauty of tropical plants in your home, consider building an indoor greenhouse. Several are commercially available, but for the do-it-yourselfers, there are many instructions available on how to make a greenhouse out of an old aquarium. Usually these aquariums may be purchased very cheaply from pet supply shops. Just ask if they have any "leakers" they are willing to sell, and usually you can get the tank and a hood for next to nothing.

Once you have your plants in good, well-draining soil, and they are growing nicely, you will want to fertilize. Less is more! Hobby gardeners tend to over-fertilize their tropical plants to give them an extra edge since they are supposedly deprived of their original habitat. Over-fertilizing, just like over-watering, needs to be avoided.

Purchase a commercial fertilizer that is specifically formulated for tropical plants and follow the directions on the package. If you cannot find any, go ahead and use a high quality organic fertilizer, which you dilute. Once the plants seem to do ok on that, you may wish to cut back on the dilution and feed them some stronger stuff.

As you can see, where there is a will, there is a way to grow the most beautiful tropical plants in climates other than the tropics!

Procedures for Pruning Your Evergreens

Evergreens are a perfect plant for you to grow around your home. They are constantly beautiful, whether in the heat of summer or covered with the fresh winter snow. Moreover, they provide mounds of cool shade and quiet comfort throughout the course of the year. They are quite easy to care for as well.

One of the most important steps in caring for your evergreens is regular pruning. This can, though, be quite intimidating for the first-timer. As a result, reading a few instructions like these certainly can't hurt your chances of doing a great job with your evergreens.

If you are a bit skiddish about completing the pruning job yourself, the chances are quite good that a wonderful lawn and garden company exists in your area, and one phone call will make them happy to complete the process for you. You will, of course, have to lay out a bit of cash to have someone else do it for you, but it will be money well spent if you are uncomfortable with the steps below.

The first step to a successful evergreen pruning session is to pay attention to the seasons. As perfect as evergreens are, there is a wrong and a right time to prune them, and pruning them at the wrong time of year could spell disaster for your plant. The best time to prune is just after winter. Remember that pruning too early can cause your plant to freeze and die back, so make sure that you do your pruning after the last frost.

Start the actual pruning by combing through your plant. Pull the branches apart and search for any dead wood. If it looks diseased, get rid of it. Even if it is only a smaller twig, getting rid of it would be a good idea at this stage of the game.

Once you've clipped the wood, look carefully at the remaining wood where you just cut. Does it look alive? Evergreen wood has a green ring just under the bark if it is alive. If all you see at this step is black or brown, the wood is dead. If it has started to discolor, it is ill, and it would be best to further trim it back to prevent illness and decay from spreading to your entire plant.

The next step in the process is to get rid of any Medusa head branches. Anywhere that you have lots of twigs coming out of the same branch head, it may begin to look like the Greek mythology character of Medusa. As a result, clipping out the undesirable branches may prove a better overall look to your evergreens.

Now you are ready to get rid of any new growth that crosses the trunk of the plant. This will help air to circulate throughout the plant. Be sure, as you are trimming your evergreens, to make sure all of your cuts are made toward the trunk. This will increase your growth rate after the pruning.

Now you are ready to start the thinning process. Get rid of all of the extra branches in the plant. You want to be able to see daylight through the tree or bush, and getting rid of excess branch material will increase your chances of doing so. Daylight hitting the center of the plant will help the plant to thrive for years to come, as the center of your plant needs light as much as any other part of it does.

If you are working with a bush, you will want to reduce its size by at least one half. Keep in mind that growth will occur quickly after the pruning process has occurred, so don't be shy about trimming quite a bit off of the plant.

No matter whether you have a bush or a tree on your hands, you need to be sure to get under the plant with a rake. Piles of debris like old sticks or leaves can be a haven for insects who want to destroy the very plant you are working with, so it is essential to get rid of the debris to keep your plant healthy throughout the course of the year.

The final step in the process is to place some mulch around the plant to increase the water intake of the plant without increasing your water bill. Pruning your evergreens isn't a difficult procedure if you carefully follow these instructions.

Several Secrets to Caring for Orchids

Orchids are one of the most beautiful plants you can grow. This exotic plant can provide endless joy to you as a home gardener, and while caring for them may seem like an overwhelming, unwinnable task, they are, in fact, one great plant that grows easily and requires very little care from you. There are several things you must know when you decide to grow orchids within your home.

The first thing you should consider when growing orchids within your home the soil you choose to pot your orchids in. In comparison to most houseplants, orchids are slow growers. You should repot each plant every one to two years. When you get ready to do this, fill the chosen container about seventy percent full of the soil of your choice. The soil you choose should be specially formulated for the care of orchids.

These kinds of mixes have lots of air pockets for delicate orchid roots. In many cases, orchid formulas are osmunda fiber, a material that slowly breaks down over time providing the perfect support for orchids, combined with pine bark and peat. There are, of course, specialized fertilizers in these mixes as well; giving your orchids that extra boost they may need as an indoor houseplant. If the plant outgrows the pot (you will know this occurs when new plant shoots come crashing over the edge of the container), it's time for a new container.

Light levels are another serious consideration in the growth of orchids. At one time, orchids were considered to only be good in greenhouse environments because of the special light levels they require. This, however, is not the only case. Orchids make great houseplants if you can give them bright, indirect light throughout both the morning and the afternoon.

If you choose to put them in a window, you must be sure it is free from drafts, as orchids are very delicate. Make sure the light intensity is between fifteen hundred and nineteen hundred-candle power. If you have large windows, you should make sure your orchids are at least nineteen inches from the window, as it is possible to give your orchids too much light.

Once you have your lighting issues worked out, your next thought when attempting to grow orchids in your home is the level of humidity. In a greenhouse environment, orchids have a much higher level of humidity than they might in a home. There are, though, several things you can do to increase the level of humidity they experience, and therefore, offer them the moisture they need to do.

First, put a small plate of pebbles at the base of your orchid container. This will help to retain the necessary water for your plants. Second, fill a mister with distilled water. Using tap water will harm the delicate leaves of your orchids. Mist your plants with the distilled water on a regular basis. Be sure, though, that you don't overmist your plants, as that can cause them to have high levels of leaf bacteria, leading to premature decay of the leaves and root systems.

On the note of humidity, you should also think about how frequently to water your orchids. With orchids, it is important to only water when the soil is dry. Hanging plants require more frequent watering, as they dry out much quicker. Certain potting soils will also require more frequent watering, particularly if you use a bark based mix.

Moreover, different types of orchids require different watering styles. Some, including Paphiopedilums and Haemeria, liked to be wet on a regular basis. Others, including Cattleyas, Laeliocattleyas, Brassolaeliocattleyas, Oncidiums, Miltonias, and Odontoglossums, require very little water, as their root systems retain water quite well, and overwatering them would be a tragic factor leading to plant decay. Be sure to do as much reading as is necessary to learn all about your choice orchid variety.

One final thing to consider in the growth of orchids is the temperature you grow them in. This, like the water level, will depend on the variety of orchid you have chosen to grow in your home. With any variety, during the freezing weather, move them from the window, as it can be at least fifteen degrees cooler in front of a window.

If you have chosen Phalaenopsis, Paphiopedilums, Vandas, Rhynchostylus and Dendrohiums, be sure you never let the temperature drop below forty-five degrees. If you have chosen Cattleyas, Epidendrums, Oncidiums, and Laelias, be sure that they live in a temperature of at least seventy degrees each day.

Growing orchids can be one of the most rewarding home gardening experiences. Do your reading, and then choose the perfect variety for you.

Tips of Growing Your Own Veggies on Your Patio

Garden fresh vegetables are one of the hallmarks of summer eating. From the unmatched taste of summer tomatoes to the taste buds that are left tingling from eating a fresh snap pea, you just can't beat that level of taste. If you live in an area where a garden simply isn't possible, though, you may be left feeling like you will never taste those foods again without handing over all of the cash in your wallet at the local farmers' market. This, however, is not the case. No matter where you live, you can grow perfect summer vegetables in containers on your patio or deck with very little effort.

The first step to growing great vegetables on your deck or patio is deciding what type of containers to use for your new hobby. There are many things to consider in this selection. You must ensure that you not only get the perfect size for each plant you intend to grow, you must also be sure you get the right shape for each vegetable you want in your new "garden." The first thing you should consider, of course, is size.

One of the biggest mistakes many patio gardeners make is choosing containers that are far too minuscule for the plants they intend to keep in the garden. If you think a particular container is the right size, get one size bigger. On the most basic level, you will need a pot that will hold a minimum of five gallons of soil. This will give your choice veggies plenty of room to spread out and develop the root system they need to create perfect summer vegetables every time.

Shape is, of course, another serious consideration. Different plants, obviously, grow differently. Some plants are climbers. Others tend to need a bit more room to spread out their roots. Do some reading before you make your plant choice. This should help to give you a better idea of the style of pot you need for your new vegetable garden.

Once you've decided on a size and style, you're ready to pick a material for your pots. You have several choices for your patio vegetable garden. One of the most obvious choices for container gardening is plastic, and with good reason. If you choose plastic pots for your container garden, you will be choosing to grow your vegetables in one of the most affordable, recyclable materials known to man.

Moreover, you will be choosing a material that holds moisture well, a must for container gardening, a material that is highly resistant to the inevitable bumps and bruises that will occur in a small space like a patio, and one that tolerates freezing if you live in a cooler climate zone. There are lots of different plastic container styles to choose from, and you are sure to find one you like at your local home and garden center. If you prefer a more traditional container material, you have a few choices.

First, perhaps you should think wood. While wood containers were, at one time, the worst possible material for container gardening, rot resistant woods like cedar, redwood, or cypress have made wood containers the choice for many container gardeners as they offer great drainage and serious insulation for folks who live in difficult climates. If wood isn't your thing, a terra cotta pot might be the perfect selection for you. These tend to be low in cost, and you have some great selection in this area that is sure to match any décor.

Once you've made the perfect container selection for you, you are ready to think about your potting soil mix. Container gardening is difficult at best, and a good potting soil can ensure that you have the best possible chance at perfect vegetables. Choose the best mix your local lawn and garden store carries.

You need something that holds moisture, but won't bog down your vegetable plant's roots. If the soil gets too heavy or retains too much moisture, your plants will die. Some mixes have extra ingredients like fertilizer, nutrients, and things that help to hold moisture in the soil. All of these can seriously increase the growth rate of your container vegetables.

The final thing you have to do when you get ready to start container gardening is choose your veggies wisely. Increasingly, new vegetable plants are being created specifically for container gardening. There are some vegetables that mature earlier, making them ideal for a container garden. Some have been designed to grow in compact spaces.

Still others are dwarf plants or baby vegetables that make it easier for them to grow in the space available. Consider "Tom Thumb" lettuce. "Golden Midget" corn might make another nice choice. If you prefer standard sized vegetables, tomatoes and squash make for perfect container selections.

Container gardening can be a fun, rewarding process if you choose the perfect materials and plants. If you're aching for fresh, summer vegetables in your current non-garden home, think container gardening.

Advocating Avocados: Is It Possible to Grow Them in Your Backyard?

Who does not love avocados? They are high in fat, but have no cholesterol. They are high in fiber, yet low in sugar. Natural suppliers of vitamins C and K, as well as the important Folate, the avocado has many avid fans that will eat it raw in salads or simply spread on crackers. Purists are known to simply open up an avocado and have at it with a spoon.

It is not surprising that many would love to grow an avocado tree or two in the backyard. As a matter of fact, many a neighbor-to-neighbor dispute has grown up over the ownership of avocados that have fallen on the other side of the fence. Yet is it possible to grow an avocado tree in your own backyard?

Prior to picking out a spot for your avocado tree, keep in mind that it will grow into a large tree that may also spread considerably. It is important to remember that these trees enjoy full sun and will not do well in shady spots. Next, it is important to consider what kind of climate your avocado tree will encounter.

There are a variety of species available, but the subtropical species will not tolerate any kind of frost. If you mistakenly do grow such a specimen in your yard, you will find all of your avocados on the ground after the first frost. Hybrids have been created that can weather frost and even live and thrive in subzero temperatures.

Once you have chosen the appropriate species of avocado tree for your area, it is important to properly prepare the soil to welcome this new tree. These trees enjoy ground that is properly mulched and aerated. Do not plant your young tree in summer, since it takes a little while to establish a good watering cycle, and young trees may die from thirst before being established enough to take up enough water and nutrients from the soil in the heat of the summer day.

It is important to fertilize your new tree. While there are several commercially formulated avocado fertilizers on the market, the one you will want to choose should have nitrogen, potassium, zinc and phosphorus. Newly planted trees need to be watered frequently to avoid drying out.

If you are starting from scratch, namely by planting an avocado seed, you will need to exercise some patience. It may take anywhere from five to ten years for a seed-grown tree to bear any fruit. Nonetheless, the process of growing your own tree from a seed can be quite rewarding. You may do so simply by purchasing an avocado berry – yes, they are considered berries or drupes – and instead of disposing of the large seed in the trash saving it.

Gently wash off any of the green flesh and then use a triangle fashioned of three toothpicks to suspend the broad end over water filled glass. Some of the seed needs to be covered by the water. Be sure to refill the water glass every so often so that evaporation does not cause the seed to sit on dry land. Within about a month you should see some roots sprout from the bottom and a stem from the top.

Some growers recommend cutting back the stem when it is about six inches tall to about three inches to allow it strengthen and produce more leaves. Others do not recommend this step.

Whatever you decide, when the roots look thick and strong, you can plant your little avocado in good potting soil by leaving half of the seed above ground. While you may not get a great tasting avocado out of the deal, you will be rewarded with a beautiful ornamental or shade tree!

It is apparent that the avocado tree can be easily grown in your own backyard. Hobby gardeners simply need to decide if they wish to plant this tree for its berry harvest, or simply for aesthetic purposes or as a large shade tree. Keep it well watered, away from wind and shade, and you will be rewarded with a beautiful, and quite possibly tasty, addition to your landscape!

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