**Gardening 101: Things I Wish I Knew When I Was A Novice Gardener**

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**Annual** – complete life cycle in one year

**Biennial** – germinate, grow in 1st year, over winter, reproduce and finish life cycle in 2nd year

**Perennial** – live, reproduce for more than 2 years, does not mean live forever

**Zones** – USDA Plant hardiness zones. Pick plants that are hardy to local zone, or may have to dig them up or move them indoors to overwinter.

To ensure success in your garden: Grow the right plant at the right place.

**Sun/Shade**: Full Sun (6 or more hrs of direct sun), Full Shade (no direct sunlight all day, only reflected light, indirect light), Part Sun (at least 4-6 hrs of direct sun,)/ Part Shade (4-6 hrs of direct sun), Dapple light

**Soil**: minerals + air + water + animals + other living matter (and their wastes or decaying bodies)

Clay, Sand, Silt, Loam (40% Sand, 40% Silt, 20% Clay)

Organic Matter 🡪 Compost 🡪 Humus

pH – measure of acidity/ alkalinity of something

Squeeze test, DIY soil test, PERC test

**Water**: Grading of site, nearby source of moisture affects the dry/wetness of soil.

**How to pick a plant**: Reputation of nursery, shape, foliage, insects and diseases, root system, stem damage and strength, weeds, buds, flowers

**Planting** – best season (fall, generally better than early spring), best weather (before it rains, preferably slow soaking rain), time of day (late afternoon, early evening), process (always water the hole thoroughly and drain before planting)

**Watering** – Frequency and amount depends on weather, soil and plants. Normally, about 1” – 2”/ week. Less frequent deep watering, early time of day or late afternoon. Avoid overhead. Use drip or low level sprinkler near root zone. New planting, larger plants and broad leaf plants need more water. Sunny spots dry up quicker. Potted plants and raised beds dry out faster than plants in the ground.

**Fertilizing** – Follow suggestions on soil test. Too much fertilizer kills plants more quickly than applying none. Add in organic matter rather than applying commercial fertilizers. Natural, organic fertilizer (including compost) can cause runoff problems. Fresh manure can burn plants.

**Weeding** -- Best to weed after rain, not when soil is soggy wet to avoid soil compaction or possibly spreading diseases. Learn to identify poison ivy. Even dead plant can cause rash. Never burn plant. Wrap in bag, dispose of in trash. Throw away gloves used to pull plant or garment in contact with plant. Wash oneself promptly with dish soap to remove oil.

**Mulching** – conserve moisture, regulate soil temp, block weed. Best mulch for most plants: Arborist chips!

**IPM –** Always start with the least invasive, least damaging measure first, e.g. physical removal of pest. Only use chemicals as last resort. Always follow directions, and safety measures.

**Organic gardening always better?** No simple answer. When done incorrectly, organic gardening can be environmentally unfriendly as well. Be aware of hidden costs of organic. Sometimes there is no choice but to apply chemicals. Conscientious combination can be the best.

**Basic tools:** Understand the task, use right tool for right task. Invest in tools that are used most often. Tools must fit user.

\*When starting a new garden, or moving into a new house, take notes and pics for one year, add compost and mulch instead of trying to plant or pull right away.

**Montgomery County Master Gardener Program**

*A non-profit volunteer program of the University of Maryland Extension (UME)*

We support the UME mission by educating residents about safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities

We offer services and events throughout the year:

* Presentations to Community Groups and Conferences
* Plant Clinics
* Horticultural Help Line
* Sample Drop-Off for ID and/or Diagnosis
* Therapeutic Horticulture
* Demonstration Gardens
* Urban Gardening Conferences

*There is no charge for Master Gardener services within Montgomery County, however, we do accept and greatly appreciate donations to support our programs and activities.*

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