

Planting a Cutting Garden

Bring beauty indoors by planting an outdoor cutting garden that is intended to provide blooms for display inside. These cutting gardens bring added benefits. The flowers attract butterflies, birds and other pollinators to your garden. And, put smiles on your friends' faces when you bring them a handpicked bouquet!

A cutting garden will include mostly long-stemmed flowers for bouquets and arrangements. You don't need a large space for a cutting garden. An empty sunny area in your yard might be the perfect spot. Consider planting in raised beds. Use pots on a balcony or patio as an oasis of color that yields flowers for the dining table.

Once you find that sunny patch in your yard, prepare for planting. Make a list of the cutting flowers you wish to plant, keeping these things in mind:

- Color combinations: Use a color wheel if your imagination needs some help!
- Plant height at maturity: Select varieties with long stems for vases.
- Plant Habit: Consider whether the plants spread out or grow compactly.
- Fragrance: Think about experiencing fragrance from a porch or deck.
- Plant health: Choose plants that are usually not bothered by pests or diseases.
- Bloom time: Remember that not all flowers bloom at the same time. You'll want some color in each season. Use a mix of annuals, bulbs and perennials. Deadhead faded blooms to promote flowering.

Flower suggestions for Ocean County include tulips, daffodils, dahlias, *Echinacea* (coneflower), *Coreopsis* (tickseed), zinnias, daylilies, marigolds, phlox, celosia, cosmos, daisies, salvia, ageratum, sweet pea, *Rudbeckia* (black-eyed Susan), roses, asters, chrysanthemums, sedum and *Gypsophila* (baby's breath).

To create your perfect bouquets or arrangements:

- Harvest flowers in the morning or the evening when it's cooler.
- Cut stems at a 45-degree angle with a clean, sharp tool such as a bypass cutter. Immediately place flowers in a bucket of water in a cool, shaded place.
- Trim off lower foliage before arranging flowers in a clean container.
- Change the water every 2-3 days. Use an organic floral preservative to increase vase life.

Checklist for May

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Be aware that the last frost date in Ocean County will vary from May 15th to 30th, depending on your location.
- ✓ Plant summer-blooming annuals and tender vegetable plants after the last frost date. Cover tender plants if frost is expected.
- ✓ Water direct seeded beds daily until seeds sprout.
- ✓ Plant dahlias, gladiolas, lilies, cannas and other summer flowering bulbs this month.
- ✓ Start spreading mulch around plants to reduce weeds.
- ✓ Work to eliminate weeds before they go to seed. Otherwise, you will be fighting them for years to come!

Lawn

- ✓ Eliminate lawn weeds. Pull by hand or spot-treat with herbicide.
- ✓ Mow lawn as needed to keep grass height at 2.5-3 in.

Ticks

- ✓ *Be aware that the risk of being bitten by an infected deer tick is greatest in May and June, when the nymph stage is active. See Rutgers [FS443](#) "Prevent Tick Bites."*

The Master Gardener Plant Sale is May 3rd. If inclement weather is expected, go to mgocinc.org for an update on the plant sale rain date.