One of my favorite garden authors, Debra Knapke, has co-authored a great book for gardeners, “Gardening Month by Month in Ohio”. Debra’s list of garden tasks for May includes: 1) Remove mulch from perennials and trim back and clear away any of last year’s growth if it was still too cold to do so in April, 2) Clear away any of the annuals or vegetables that didn’t make it to the compost pile last fall, 3) By the end of the month, you will have a good idea of what has been damaged or killed back over winter, and you can trim or remove plants as needed, 4) Move or divide any perennials that didn’t have enough space last summer, 5) Start new garden beds or expand and improve old ones, 6) Begin to harden off any houseplants you plan to move outdoors for summer, 7) Work compost into your garden beds and fork them over, removing weeds as you go, to prepare them for planting later in the month, 8) When planning your vegetable garden, consider planting extra to donate to a local food bank or homeless shelter, 9) Prune early-flowering shrubs, such as forsythia, once they are finished flowering, if needed, 10) May is the perfect time to plant such vegetables as beans, beets, leaf lettuce, peas, potatoes, radishes and spinach. They are easy to grow from seed and mature quickly.

Items on the “to do” list at the Mahaffey household are being crossed off and more are being added. This “stay at home” time has given us time to cut down 3 dead trees, add 4 feet to my Herb raised bed in front of the house, construct a new window box on the Potting Shed, construct a row cover for my cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower, pull Garlic Mustard plants (that seem to everywhere this year), move my Monarch Waystation sign to a new location, and we got a stock tank ready for extended season gardening. I have garden planted earlier than ever before thanks to my new raised beds. We were the recipients of several hard frosts in the past few weeks that really took a toll on the garden. The Asparagus literally “melted” from the cold and the Radish seedlings turned yellow.

As I was planting some more potatoes in a grow bag, I received a text from a friend. It read, “Is it too early to plant Cucumbers? How about Tomatoes?” I laughed and shot back this text, “Are you feeling lucky? We could still have a frost in May, but if you want to try it....go ahead and keep your fingers crossed!” I was feeling lucky in mid-April and planted a Pineapple Sage plant in the middle of one of my raised beds. It made it through the first hard frost, but then sadly succumbed to the second hard frost. I sent my friend the photograph of the brown plant and wished her luck. Her quick reply? “I think I will wait awhile.”

Interested in learning more about controlling pests in your garden and landscape? Join us for a Zoom seminar on May 21 at 3:00 p.m. James Morris, OSUE Brown County Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator, will talk about Integrated Pest Management, an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management. We will be posting information on the OSUE Brown County Facebook Page and website on how to join the Zoom seminar.

Arts and Crafts gardener and designer, Gertrude Jekyll, said,” The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

Remember to take time to enjoy your garden.