



Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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Greetings,

This long, cool spring following last summer's drought conditions has been great for plant establishment and growth! Spring blooming trees and shrubs are just spectacular this year. While we welcome the rain, all of us are anxious to get back out in the sun and resume planting and gardening in general. This issue contains information on more of our new services, so please let us know how we might help you in your garden.

First They Sleep...Then They Creep...Then They Leap!

I think that all gardeners are a naturally impatient bunch. When we plant a new shrub or perennial we want it to bloom "on demand" filling our garden with lush mature foliage and flowers. Unfortunately, plants don't work this way. Like a fine wine they take time to mature. They sleep, they creep and they leap!

UPCOMING EVENT!!

Pumpkin Brook will have a booth at the Lancaster River Festival on Saturday, June 11. Join us for a full day of family activities as we celebrate the transformation of the Nashua River from a polluted eyesore to a spectacular natural resource. Stephanie White's husband, Peter Stanton, is co-chair for the event. Click [here](#) for more information.

This trend refers to the growth habit of shrubs and perennials in their first three years of growth. The first year they "sleep." This is when the plant is most concerned with root development and will only sustain leaf and stem growth as a means of providing food for the root growth going on behind the scenes.

In the "creep" phase, the second year, the plant has had some time to develop its root system and so it begins dividing its energy between root growth and above ground growth. A small amount of above ground growth can be seen in this stage.

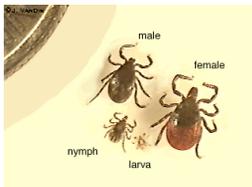


Perennial Garden in Full Bloom

Finally in the third year, the plant "leaps." With a stable enough root system to support significant stem, leaf and

flower growth the plant seems to really come alive with a vigor that hasn't been seen until this point. In the following years, depending on conditions such as spring freezes, light conditions, disease and insect issues and the particular attributes of your plant, the growth pattern will continue to mimic the "leap" phase. Of course there are exceptions to this rule. For example, dwarf shrubs may have a more subtle pattern of growth, and fast growing shrubs like pussy willow, forsythia, and beauty berry may have a shorter "sleep" phase. I find that by remembering the "sleep, creep, leap" phenomenon it allows me to be a little more patient as a gardener. And, if I really can't take that empty space, it provides me with a good excuse to shop for annuals.

New Tick & Mosquito Program



Ticks

Pumpkin Brook now offers a tick and mosquito spray program using a natural liquid garlic concentrate used to repel mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, black flies, gnats, and a host of other pests from your yard. The garlic smell becomes unnoticeable within minutes of application to humans, while effective on pests for up to a month or more. Generally, four applications are enough for the entire mosquito and tick season. In cases of heavy infestation, more applications may be required. The spray does not harm humans, pets, or plants. For more information, please [e-mail](#) Carmine or give him a call at 978-870-0423.

New Root Excavation Service

Pumpkin Brook has purchased an Air Spade® that uses highly compressed air to excavate soil and mulch away from a plant's roots. This tool can be used for various tasks such as:

- Compaction relief
- Bare-root transplanting
- Trenching around and under plant roots (drainage and utility work)
- Trunk flare excavation and girdling root elimination
- Soil fertility applications



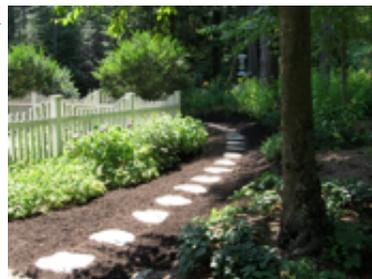
Al using the new Air Spade to expose tree roots

Click this [link](#) to see a YouTube video featuring our crew using the air spade to transplant a tree. For more information [e-mail](#) Carmine or call him at 978-870-0423.

It's May...Time to Mulch

Now that soil temperatures have finally warmed up, we've begun applying mulch. This gives the garden a smooth texture, rich color, and sweet scent. Beyond the aesthetic value of creating color and contrast in the garden, mulch can provide many benefits for both the garden and the gardener:

- Suppresses weed germination by smothering weed seeds
- Moderates soil temperature, thereby keeping the soil cooler in the summertime and warmer in the wintertime
- Preserves soil moisture
- Improves soil structure when the mulch decomposes and breaks down to form nutrient rich topsoil
- Provides habitat for beneficial soil organisms and mycorrhizal fungi
- Prevents soil compaction and soil crusting, increasing the circulatory capacity of the soil
- Prevents soil erosion



Mulched pathway and shrubs

Depending on our clients' preferences, we will apply a brown pine bark mulch, black composted mulch, or reddish all natural hemlock mulch. We also can apply fine textured mulch which works very well in vegetable or perennial gardens and breaks down rapidly by the end of a season. All of these mulches are free of chemical dyes or toxic materials. If you have a large property we can arrange a power mulch application which blows in mulch using a long hose for a very efficient application.

Before mulch goes down, we suggest that beds be edged to keep grass from encroaching. Edging is like the frame around a picture, setting off all the plants within the bed.

When we apply mulch we take great care to apply it to the proper depth (typically 2 inches) and to avoid covering plants or creating "mulch volcanoes" that cut off air circulation and promote disease. The root flare (the area at the base of a trunk that widens out, transitioning the root zone with the main stem) should always be exposed to ensure the health of the tree.

Spreading mulch can be very physical work and is best done by professionals. Call Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening at 978-597-3005 or email us at phw@seedlingspecialist.com to set up a time for your mulch application.

Pest to Watch Out For - Roseslug Sawfly

Roseslug sawfly (*Endelomyia aethiops*) larvae can be a nasty pest of roses in late May/early June. The pest gets its name from its ability to lay eggs in plant leaves or stems with a saw-like egg laying mechanism. The wormlike larvae are greenish yellow with orange heads, reach a half inch in size and have a similar appearance to caterpillars. They will skeletonize the upper surface of rose leaves sucking out the soft tissue and creating translucent patches in between the veins that will eventually turn brown. Regular inspection of roses is crucial because feeding typically progresses quickly, and extensive leaf damage can occur if infestations are not noticed.



Damage to rose leaf caused by roseslug sawfly

What can be done if damage is seen? Hand removal can be effective if caught at the right time. Insecticidal soap can be used for low populations of young larvae. More severe infestations can be controlled with neem oil.

Soil amendment is critical in rose gardens, as soil microorganisms can then thrive in healthy balanced soil. They attack eggs of this pest before the larvae have a chance to emerge.



Paeonia officinalis
'Rubra Plena'

Typically, the roses will releaf. Only one generation per year emerges from the soil. If leaf damage is seen, call Pumpkin Brook right away to arrange spot spraying.

Plant Pick - *Paeonia officinalis* 'Rubra Plena'

I just love this early peony which has opened in my garden during this week of rain. It is shorter than the traditional double peony and requires no staking! The leaves are a bit different, too, almost like those of a tree peony. It forms interesting seed pods during the summer.

May Is the Time For...

- Planting annuals, tropicals and warm season vegetables like tomatoes. Soil temperatures are approaching 55 degrees by the end of the month, so it's safe.
- Planting trees, shrubs and perennials
- Dividing and transplanting established perennials - last call until fall
- Keeping up with weeding, ferreting out the weeds that hide under perennials

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- Pruning shrubs that are late to leaf out such as Clethra, Itea, Rose of Sharon and Smokebush
- Pruning vines that are late to leaf out such as Trumpet Vine
- Edging and mulching garden beds
- Staking peonies before they bloom
- Training climbing roses and clematis to trellises
- Fertilizing spring blooming bulbs as they finish blooming, making notes for new additions
- Watching for aphids to emerge and feed on tender plant tips when temperatures warm up after rain - give them a blast of water from a hose or spray with insecticidal soap for large infestations
- Controlling slugs with copper mesh barriers or sprinkling Sluggo™, a bait with iron phosphate that breaks down naturally



Zinnias

Take heart, the warm weather will be here soon and we will be in for another show of bloom - rhododendrons, delphiniums, roses, salvias, viburnums, and on and on. Something to look forward to!

Sincerely,
Priscilla

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