Common Gardening Terms

Hoard Museum Perennial Gardening Seminar – September 23, 2017

A

Acid Soil: Soil with a pH between 0 and 7.0 (on a scale of 0.0-14.0), 7 is neutral, and soils over 7 are alkaline. Most plants prefer soils of around 6 - 7. Often referred to as "sour" soil by gardeners.

Aeration: Any method of loosening soil or compost to allow air to circulate.

Aerobic: Describes organisms living or occurring only when oxygen is present.

Alkaline: A soil with a pH between 7.0 and 14 (on a scale of 0.0-14.0). Most plants prefer soils of around 6 - 7. Often referred to as "sweet" soil by gardeners.

Anaerobic: Describes organisms living or occurring where there is no oxygen.

Annuals: A plants whose life cycle takes a year to complete, from seed germination, to flowering, to setting seed and dying. It will not reappear next year, unless new plants grow from the previous year's seeds.

B

Bareroot: Plants that are supplied/sold without soil around their roots. Usually they are dug up during their dormant period, rinsed of soil and sold for replanting.

Bedding plant: Plants that generally are planted in masses purely for show. Very often bedding plants are annuals, which bloom all summer.

Beneficial Insect: An insect that benefits your garden by eating or laying its eggs in other insects, thereby controlling their population.

Biennial: A plant that completes its full life-cycle in two growing seasons. It produces leaves in the first year, and flowers and seeds in the second, then dies.

Biodegradable: Able to decompose or break down through natural bacterial or fungal action. Substances made of organic matter are biodegradable.

Biological Pest Control: Using living organisms such as beneficial insects or parasites to destroy garden pests.

Bolting: When a plant, such as rhubarb, produces flowers or seeds prematurely instead of a crop. This is usually the result of excessive heat and sun exposure.

Bone Meal: Finely ground fertilizer composed of white or light gray bone that adds phosphorus to the soil.

C

Calcitic Limestone: A common material used for lowering the acidity of soil that has an acid level that is too high. This type is most commonly used and contains calcium carbonate.

Chelation: The formation of bonds between organic compounds and metals, some of which are insoluble, as in humus. Soluble chelates are used in fertilizers to help keep nutrient metals, such as iron, mobile in the soil and thus available to plants rather than locked up in insoluble mineral salts.

Chlorosis: A yellowing or blanching of the leaves due to lack of chlorophyll, nutrient deficiencies or disease. Leaves may appear yellow with green veins.

Clay Soil: Soil composed of many tiny plate-like soil particles that can compact with time to form a hard, solid mass that makes shoveling difficult, digging holes more laborious, and often results in poor drainage. Clay soil should not be tilled or walked on when wet to prevent compaction. The winter freeze/thaw cycle will help break up compaction.

Cold Frame: An unheated structure usually made of wood and covered with glass or plastic. Cold frames are used to protect plants from frost and are helpful season extenders.

Companion Planting: The sowing of seeds in the garden in such a way that plants help each other grow instead of competing against each other. Look for 'Companion Planting' lists.

Compost: Decayed organic matter (leaves, grass clippings, twigs, kitchen refuse) that create a soil-like substance that is high in organic matter, an excellent fertilizer, and capable of improving almost any soil so that it's richer, healthier, and better able to hold moisture. It is dark, odorless and rich in nutrients.

Controlled Release Fertilizer: Also called Time Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer comes in pellets and is an improved version of Slow Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer is released based on soil temperature itself (not microbe action) and tends to be more exact than Slow Release Fertilizer.

Cool-Season Grass: These grasses put on most of their growth in spring before temperatures begin exceeding 75 degrees Fahrenheit and in the fall when temperatures cool down. They generally maintain good color through the summer but won't grow much when it is hot.

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Corm: An underground stem which becomes enlarged and produces roots and top growth during the growing season.

Crown: The join between the roots and the base of the plant top growth.

Cultivate: Turning over and breaking up the surface of the soil, removing large stones, lumps and weeds ready for planting.

Cutting: A method of plant propagation whereby a piece of plant leaf, stem, root or bud is cut from a parent plant and dipped in a rooting hormone. It is then inserted into a growing medium to form roots, thus developing a new plant.

D

Damping Off: Decay of young seedlings at ground level following fungal attack. Often the result of soil borne diseases and over watering.

Dappled Shade: Areas where there is a mixture of sun and shade, generally because a deciduous tree is nearby. Dappled shade is similar to partial shade.

Dead head: The act of pinching, pruning or snapping off dead heads of flowers. This makes the plant look better, will prevent the plant setting to seed, and encourage more blooms.

Deep Shade: An area with less than 2 hours of dappled sun a day, description of a plant that thrives in that light.

Deer Resistant Plants: Plants that deer are less likely to nibble on. Hungry deer (or rabbits, ground hogs, squirrels etc...) will, however, eat almost anything if they are hungry. Deer tastes also vary by region so trial and error may be necessary to choose deer resistant plants for your area.

Desiccate: Cause to dry up. Insecticidal soap desiccates its victims.

Direct Seed or Direct Sowing: To seed directly into the soil instead of starting your seeds indoors.

Division: Splitting mature perennials apart to make several smaller plants is called dividing. It's important because it revitalizes plants even as it helps you fill out your beds and control plant sizes.

Double Digging: A method of preparing the soil by digging a trench then putting the soil from one row into the next row

Drought Resistant: Plants that can withstand periods with little to no supplemental water when planted and established in the landscape. No plant in a pot is truly drought resistant as they all need some water. All plants will need to be watered while getting established. Annuals and perennials need 2 to 3 weeks to establish, shrubs and trees need a year to become established. Often used interchangeably with drought tolerant although their definitions are different.

Drought Tolerant: Plants that deal with severe drought on a regular basis, and recover from repeated wilting. All plants will need to be watered while getting established. Annuals and perennials need 2 to 3 weeks to establish, shrubs and trees need a year to become established. Often used interchangeably with drought resistant although their definitions are different.

E

Everblooming: A flower that produces a continual supply of blooms throughout a season.

Exposure: the optimum amount of sun or shade each plant needs to thrive

- **Full Sun**: 6 or more hours of direct sun a day
- **Partial Sun or Partial Shade**: 4 to 6 hours of direct sun a day
- **Full Shade**: less than 4 hours of direct sun a day
- **Dappled Shade**: a mixture of sun and shade, generally because a deciduous tree is nearby; similar to partial shade.

F

Fertilizer: An organic or synthetic material added to the soil or the plant, that is important for its nutrient value.

Fertilizing: To add nutrition to your plants using either commercial or non-commercial fertilizers or compost.

- **Controlled Release Fertilizer**: Also called Time Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer comes in pellets and is an improved version of Slow Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer is released based on soil temperature itself (not microbe action) and tends to be more exact than Slow Release Fertilizer.
- **Heavy Feeders**: Plants that need a lot of fertilizer for optimal performance. Regular applications of fertilizer are necessary for continued performance.
- **Light Feeders**: Plants that do not need a lot of fertilizer for optimal performance. Over feeding Light Feeders can cause toxicity.
- **N-P-K:** Ratio of Nitrogen (N) to Phosphorous (P) to Potassium (K) in a fertilizer. These are the main nutrients required by plants.

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- **Slow Release Fertilizer**: Fertilizer that comes in pellets and is slowly released based largely on microbes which are more or less active based on soil temperatures.
- **Time Release Fertilizer**: Also called Controlled Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer comes in pellets and is an improved version of Slow Release Fertilizer. Fertilizer is released based on soil temperature itself (not microbe action) and tends to be more exact than Slow Release Fertilizer.
- **Trace Elements**: Nutrients that plants need in small amounts. Common trace elements include Boron, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, and Zinc. These elements are usually included in most commercial fertilizers.
- **Water Soluble Fertilizer**: Fertilizer that either comes in liquid form or comes in crystal form that is dissolved in water.

Foliar Fertilizing: A technique of feeding plants by applying liquid fertilizer directly to plant leaves.

Frost-Free Dates: Average date in spring when your area no longer experiences frost and the average date in fall for when your area experiences the first frost. This date is important for knowing when to plant in spring. Knowing both spring and fall frost dates will help you determine the length of your growing season.

Full Shade: less than 4 hours of direct sun a day

Full Sun: 6 or more hours of direct sun a day

Fungicides: Compounds used to prevent the spread of fungi in gardens and crops, which can cause serious damage to plants.

G

Germinate: The beginning of growth in seeds, the action of sprouting, budding or shooting, above the soil. This occurs whenever a plant or seed begins to vegetate into leafy young plants. The breaking of dormancy in seeds or the sprouting of pollen grains deposited on a stigma.

Green Manure: A crop that is grown and then incorporated into the soil to increase soil fertility or organic matter content. Usually turned over into the soil a few weeks before new planting begins.

H

Harden Off: A process whereby a plant is gradually introduced to cold temperatures giving it a chance to build cold tolerance. Plants are naturally hardened off in the fall as temperatures grow colder. Hardening off is often used to acclimate greenhouse grown plants to cooler outdoor temperatures in spring. Hardening off will generally take several weeks.

Hardy: A plant that can withstand frost exposure without means of protection.

Hardiness- A means of measuring how tolerant a plant is to cold and frost, without protection.

Hardiness zone: A geographically defined zone based on the lowest average temperature each area is expected to receive during the winter. Categorizes which plants can thrive where; hardiness zones are designated by a number (1-11), such as zone 7. Hardiness zones are used to determine whether a plant is likely to be perennial in your area. Gardening books and websites can help you determine your hardiness zone. *(Fort Atkinson is in zone 5a*)

Heavy Feeder: Plants that need a lot of fertilizer for optimal performance. Regular applications of fertilizer are necessary for continued performance.

Heavy Soil: A soil that contains a high proportion of clay and is poorly drained.

Heirloom: An open-pollinated plant variety that has remained unchanged through hybridization for at least 50-100 years.

Herbaceous: Used to describe plants which tend to have soft fleshy stems rather than tough woody ones.

Herbicide: A type of pesticide use to control weeds by destroying the plants or inhibiting their growth.

Horticulture: The science of cultivating plants.

Humus: Dark organic matter in soils, derived from decomposed plant matter. Typically dark loamy earth.

Hybrid: A new plant is created by cross-pollinating two different species or varieties.

I

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): A pest control strategy that uses an array of complementary methods: natural predators and parasites, pest-resistant varieties, cultural practices, biological controls, various physical techniques, and pesticides as a last resort. It is an ecological approach that can significantly reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides.

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L

Light Feeders: Plants that do not need a lot of fertilizer for optimal performance. Over feeding Light Feeders can cause toxicity.

Loam: A mixture of clay, sand and silt making a rich soil

M

Micro-climate: Microclimate can be applied to a variety of things. For gardeners, it is a spot within a garden that differs from the general environment. Some examples would be a wet spot where water collects during rain, a spot that remains warmer in the winter: often due to a structure, a spot that is sheltered from the wind, etc...

Micro-Nutrients: Some mineral elements are needed by plants in very small quantities. If the plants you are growing require specific "trace elements" and they are not getting them through the soil, they must be added.

Mulch: It is a substance applied to the top of the soil around plants. It can be organic or inorganic and may serve several different purposes. Mulch is often made of organic material, such as wood chips, grass clippings, compost, straw, or leaves. Mulch helps retain soil moisture, decreases weeds, reduces erosion, helps cool plant roots, adds organic matter (provided organic mulch is used), increases the attractiveness of the landscape, and protects plants from adverse winter conditions. Mulch should never be resting against the base of a plant.

N

Naturalized: To plant randomly and without a pattern – especially in reference to bulbs in a lawn or a native plant area.

Needs Good Drainage: These plants do not do well if they remain wet for extended periods of time and should be planted in locations or containers where water quickly drains.

No-Till-Gardening: This type of gardening calls for no cultivation (or tilling) of the soil after the initial tilling. In its place, regular mulches are added and plants are planted through the mulch. This saves on labor and eliminates weeds, which might germinate as a result of tilling.

N-P-K: An abbreviation for the three main nutrients that have been identified as absolutely necessary for plants are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). These three are also known as "macronutrients," and are the source of the three-number ratio commonly found on fertilizer labels

O

Open pollination: Plants whose seeds develop through random, natural pollination such as wind, field movement, or insect activity, not through human involvement.

Organic: A fertilizer, mulch, pesticide, or plant food that is of animal or vegetable origin; plants grown without the use of chemical or synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.

Organic Gardening: This method of gardening is based on building a healthy, living soil through composting and using supplemental nutrients from naturally occurring deposits. The basic principle is to feed the soil so the soil will feed the plants. Healthy plants are better able to resist pests and disease thus reducing the need for control. If control is needed, cultural and mechanical methods are used first. Naturally derived pesticides are used only as a last resort

Ornamental: Plants grown for aesthetics, not consumption or economic use.

Over-wintering: This is a process where a plant that is not cold hardy is taken indoors or otherwise manipulated to keep it alive through the winter

P

Partial Sun or Partial Shade: 4 to 6 hours of direct sun a day

Perennial: A herbaceous (non-woody stemmed) plant that lives for multiple growing seasons. They are either evergreens or die back to the ground after frost but their roots survive the winter and put up new shoots in the spring.

Pest: Any living organism causing harm to cultivated plants.

Pesticide: Any substance used to control or kill pests such as insects, weeds, animals, or microbes; may be organic or synthetic.

pH: A measure of how acidic or basic your soil is. A pH of 7 is considered neutral. Acidic soils have a pH less than 7. Basic soils have a pH greater than 7. Most plants prefer a pH between 6 and 7. Some plants, called acid loving (azalea, camellia, citrus), will take a pH between 5 and 7. pH is important because plants don't like soils that are too acidic or basic. pH can be adjusted using amendments. Soil pH is very important because it affects the availability of nutrients to plants and the activity of microorganisms in the soil.

Pinching Off or Pinching Out: Removing fresh growth usually at the top of the plant to promote a fuller, bushier plant. Often this is done by using your finger nails to pinch off the newest growth but scissors, pruning shears, or a knife can also be used.

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Pistil: The female sexual reproductive, seed-bearing organ of a flower, consisting of an ovary, style, and stigma.

Pollination: The transfer of pollen from the stamen (male part of the flower) to the pistil (female part of the flower), which results in the formation of a seed.

Propagation: The method of starting a new plant. (e.g. seeds and cuttings)

Pruning: Using pruning shears, scissors, a knife, or loppers to shape or rejuvenate a plant by removing dead, injured or diseased foliage or branches, or to control the size or shape of the plant. Generally pruning is much more drastic than pinching. Pruning is most commonly used on shrubs, trees, and perennials.

R

Raised Bed: A planting bed raised up higher than ground level, usually by means of constructed sides. This structure can provide better drainage, aeration and warmer soils.

Rhizome: A plant stem that grows horizontally, usually under the surface of the soil. New plants will grow from various points of the rhizome. (e.g. Iris)

Root Ball: The mass of roots under the plant, with soil attached.

Root Bound: A plant that has been in a pot a long time may have roots that circle around the edges of the pot. These roots may not grow out into the soil. To encourage good root growth cut or break up the roots to separate them when transplanting from the current pot to a larger pot or garden.

Root Rot: Fungal disease caused by several different types of fungi that cause the roots of a plant to turn brown, grey, and/or slimy. Root rot impairs a plant's ability to uptake water and will often kill plants that are infected. Root rot is often caused by chronic over-watering. The most common symptom of root rot is a plant that is wilting even though the soil is wet.

S

Sandy Soil: Sandy soil is composed of many irregular to rounded tiny grains of sand, as opposed to the many tiny plate-like soil particles that make up a clay soil. Sandy soil drains very quickly and doesn't hold on to fertilizer well.

Seedling: A plant that has just emerged from its seed with its first root, stem and leaves.

Self-Pollinating: Plants that do not require pollen from another plant to produce fruit.

Side Dressing: A method of fertilization in which one works a little fertilizer into the soil near a mature plant.

Sludge: Solid sediment left over from industrial wastewater treatment plants that is commonly used as a fertilizer or livestock food-additive because it contains high levels of nutrients, but it can contain high levels of heavy metals and pollutants.

Soil Amendment: Material added to the soil to improve its properties. These may include: water retention, permeability, water infiltration, drainage, aeration and structure. Soil amendments are mostly organic matter or very slow release minerals and are typically worked into the topsoil.

Soil Test: A measurement of the major nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium) and pH levels in the soil. The local Extension Office can perform soil testing.

Staking: The practice of driving a support into the ground next to a plant to support it in its growth.

Stamen: The male reproductive organ of a flower, consisting of a filament and a pollen-containing anther.

T

Tender Perennial: Plants that are perennial in warm locations but are not winter hardy in cold locations *(are recommended for zones higher than your zone – for this area, higher than 5a)*. These plants are often treated as annuals in cold climates or may be in the house plant section.

Thinning: Removing some seedlings to avoid over-crowding and allowing other seedlings to grow with sufficient space. Trees and shrubs can also be thinned by removing older branches.

Tilth: Describes the general health of the soil including a balance of nutrients, water, and air. Soil that is healthy and has good physical qualities is in good tilth.

Topdressing: Applying fertilizers or some kind of soil amendment after seeding, transplanting or once a plant has been established.

Topsoil: The upper layer of soil that you plant in. It varies in depth from place to place, but will almost always be less than a foot deep and can be as little as 2 inches deep. Also referring to soil purchased in bags from garden centers.

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Trace Elements: Nutrients that plants need in small amounts. Common trace elements include Boron, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, and Zinc. These elements are usually included in most commercial fertilizers.

Transplant: To remove plants from one place and replant them in another (or from a container into the ground).

Transplanting: Taking a plant from its current growing position, and placing it in a new one. Can be in the garden flower beds, or from one pot to another.

Trellis: Latticework used to support climbing plants

V

Variegated: Foliage that is streaked or blotched with more than one color is referred to as variegated. The leaves are often mixtures of green, yellow, white, and cream.

Vermicomposting: The use of red worms to convert food scraps or other organic materials into worm castings.

Vermiculite: A lightweight, flaky mineral called "mica" that has been heated to the point of expansion. The sponge-like granules are then capable of holding both water and air. This amendment is added to potting mixtures and container gardens to improve root growth due to aeration and moisture retention.

Volunteer: In the garden, a volunteer is a plant that grows where it has not been planted. This difference between a volunteer and a weed is that the volunteer started as the seed of one of the flowers you planted. These self-sowed plants often don't appear until the season after you've planted the original.

W

Warm-season Grass: These grasses won't start growing until mid to late spring or even early summer. Their major growth and flowering happens when the weather is hot. They will usually turn shades of brown for the winter.

Water Plant: Plants that can grow on pond edges or in ponds or streams.

Water Soluble Fertilizer: Fertilizer that either comes in liquid form or comes in crystal form that is dissolved in water.

Waterlogged: Soil that is saturated with water, to the point where there is no air between soil particles, and plants cannot thrive.

Weed: Any plant growing in a place where it is not wanted. Also, a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth; especially one that tends to overgrow or choke out more desirable plants.

Wet Feet: When the soil in a container or the landscape stays wet, plants may be referred to as having wet feet. The roots on some plants do not like to be constantly wet and we might say that the plant doesn't like to have wet feet. Conversely, the roots on some plants don't mind being constantly wet and we might say that the plant doesn't mind having wet feet.

Worm Casting: The digested organic waste of red worms. Gardeners consider them the most nutrient dense organic compost available.

X

Xeriscape: A low maintenance landscape with native plants and small or non-existent areas of turf grass. One of the primary goals of xeriscaping is to reduce landscape water use.

Definitions taken from:

www.provenwinners.com
www.lovethegarden.com
www.familytime.com
www.sparkpeople.com
www.planetnatural.com