



# Spring fervor: plan for your garden planting

By ED HUTCHISON

Special to the Record-Eagle

The planting season kicks off with a flurry — it is like one weekend we are couch potatoes and the next, we are planting zealots. Often, we venture to the garden center or greenhouse without a clue. Call it the spirit of the moment.

So how do you venture forward fully armed with information that will help you choose plants that are best suited for your plans this year?

Here are some tips to use in gathering information before you head to the frenzied environment of the planting season:

**Assess** — Know how much room you have in any given spot to plant and how much sun reaches the area. Be critical in assessing sunlight. Just because an area faces south or west does not guarantee a sunny growing environment. Trees and shrubs near the area may well transform what the compass says is a sunny area into one that is quite shady.

**Learn beforehand** — newspapers, magazines and books provide plenty of gardening advice. Great help is available on line. Here are a few really good links:

■ [www.scottsc.com](http://www.scottsc.com) — advice on lawn care, including fertilizer, pest identification, disease issues, watering, questions and answers, e-mail reminders, frequently asked questions (FAQ) and so on.

■ [www.bulb.com](http://www.bulb.com) — tips on planting and growing bulbs of all sorts and includes information on naturalizing bulbs, forcing, choosing, planting and caring for spring and summer blooming bulbs, history and so on by The Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center.

■ [www.rose.org](http://www.rose.org) — brush up on selecting, planting and caring for roses and see gorgeous pictures of some of the new varieties by the All-America Rose Selections (a trade group).

■ [www.chicago-botanic.org](http://www.chicago-botanic.org) — probably one of the best sites on the web for gardeners in the Midwest with selections such as how-to, plant profiles, best garden plants and many more features from the Chicago Botanic Garden.

■ [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org) — another great site and it is regionalized to provide gardening information throughout the country. Especially useful: The article library, regional reports, dictionary and zone finder. By the National Gardening Association.

**Study labels and plant tags** — look for details that speak to mature size, spacing, sun and moisture requirements. While the information is bare bones, it is better than not knowing these things. Catalogs put out by seed companies and nurseries are a great source as well and often have far

Photo by Ed Hutchison

Books that focus on a specific topic as well as more general gardening books can be a huge help when planning something new, labor-intensive or long-lived.

more information about care.

**Consult specialty books beforehand** — if you are planning something new or potentially difficult, look through a few different books on the same subject. Common sense goes a long way in gardening projects with a one-year life — such as annuals and vegetables — but for projects that are more long-term or involve more work (water gardening is a prime example), you would do well to spend a few hours in the library or bookstore reading up on the subject.

**Ed Hutchison is a freelance writer and gardening expert from Midland, MI.**

## Getting the Bugs Out

Warm weather creates ideal breeding conditions for bees, hornets, yellow jackets and wasps, nuisances to many and a danger to those allergic to them. Tom Ellis, an entomologist at Michigan State University says there are effective ways to control stinging pests.

Honeybees are harmless unless disturbed. But if bees get inside the walls of your home, they can leave behind honeycombs that stain walls and floors and draw hungry critters. Pest Control Services can help. A technician might call in an apiculturist to move the hive; professional extermination could also be required. Once the bees are gone, clean out all honeycombs.

If you spot wasps in your yard, eliminate them. Wait until evening when the wasps are home, and suit up for battle with loose clothing, gloves, eye protection and a hat. Spray the nest entrance with wasp and hornet spray. Don't plug the hole — wasp nests often have other entrances that allow escape. Respray if needed.

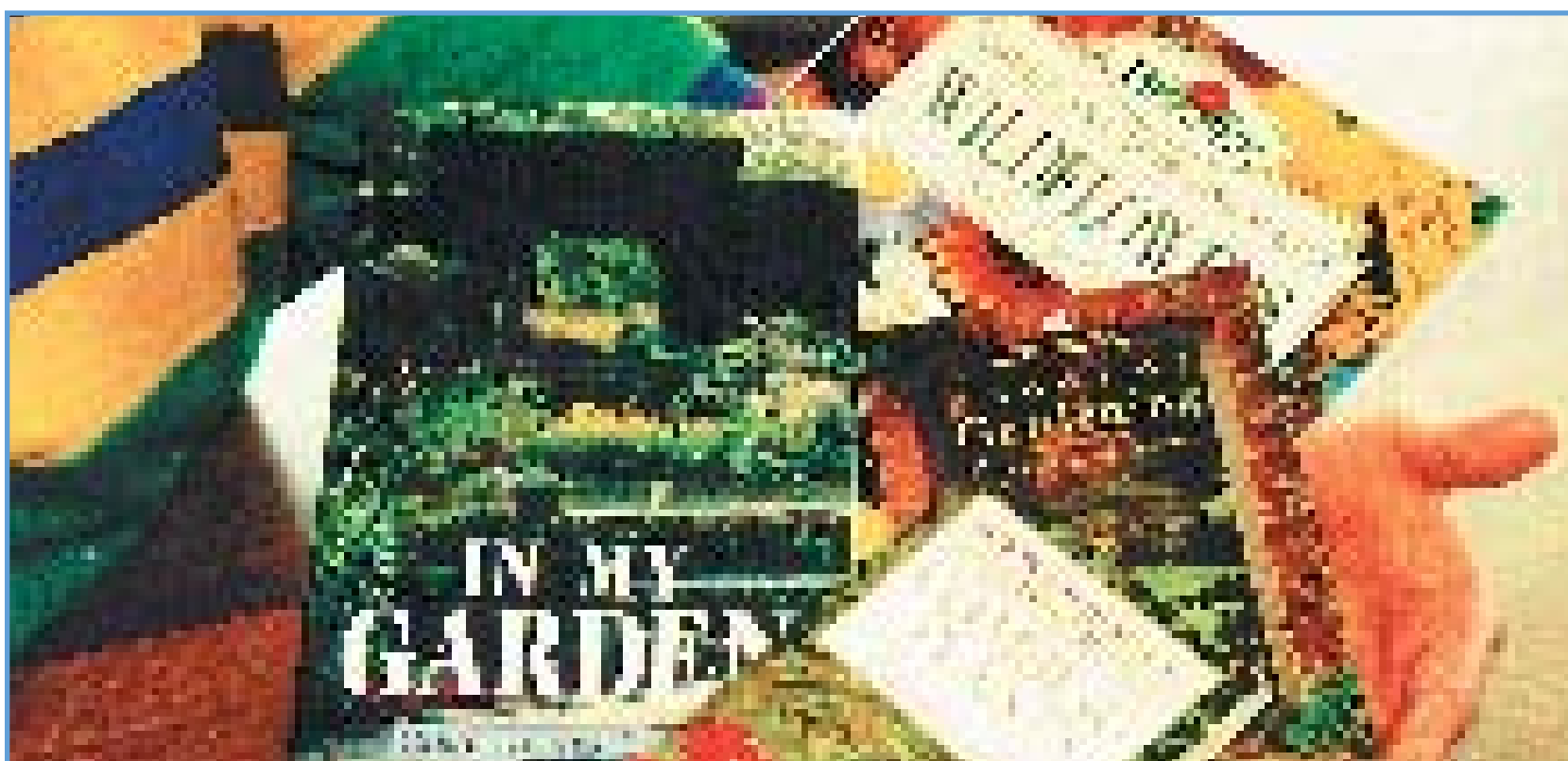
For yellow jackets, follow the same procedure as for wasps. But this time, plug the nest hole by packing it tightly with moist dirt. Hornets are harmless unless disturbed. If they are a nuisance, spray the nest with wasp and hornet spray. If they nest inside your home, wait until the first freeze and seal the nest entrance with silicone caulk.

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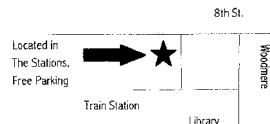
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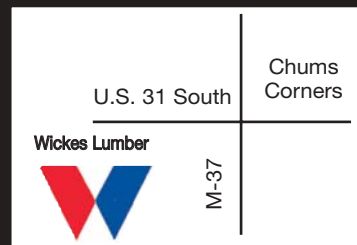
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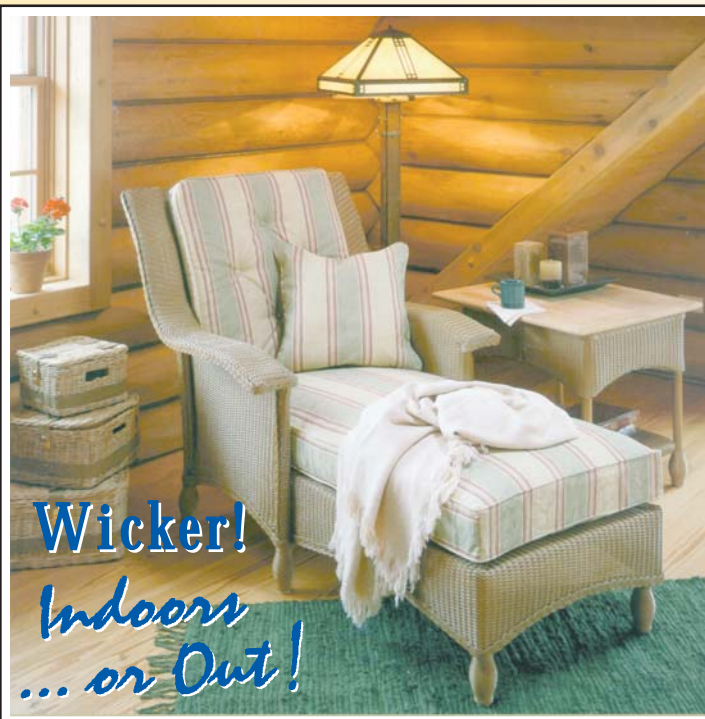


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