

Extension is...the delivery of research-based information to those who can actually use it.

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Which Myths can survive Research-Based Science to be deemed Good Practices?

What is a Myth? Everybody knows it; It's Natural & Safe; It's Cheaper; or It's New & Improved

Jeff Gillman, The Truth About Garden Remedies, Timber Press, 2008

Linda Chalker-Scott, The Informed Gardener, University of Washington Press, 2008

Join On Facebook: The Garden Professors

Website: The Garden Professors: blogs.extension.org/gardenprofessors

C.L. Fornari, Coffee For Roses, St. Lynn's Press, 2014

Remember: Don't kill the messenger
Plants and People have different biology
Consider the Placebo Effect;
Get your soil tested
Natural and Organic don't always mean safe

The Myths:

Woodpeckers Will Peck Out Your Eyes If You Move Peonies At Night

False. Ancient Greeks believed peonies were magical.

Ants Are Needed To Make Peonies Open

False. They're just eating sugar the flower is secreting.

Grow Paperwhites in Vodka

True. 5% alcohol solution will keep plant 1/3 shorter. One part 40% liquor + 7 parts water or 1 part 70% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol + 10-11 parts water

Rhubarb Stalks Are Poisonous After the Fourth of July

False. The leaves are always poisonous. The stalks become tougher.

The plant needs the stalks and leaves to create energy to store for next year.

Male Bell Peppers (3 lobes) Are For Cooking; Female Bell Peppers (4 lobes) Are Sweeter For Eating Raw

False. Peppers don't have gender. The number of lobes and flavor are genetic.

Cucurbits Have Male and Female Flowers (Squash, Zucchini, Cucumber, Pumpkin, Gourds)

True. Only the females produce fruit. Look for miniature fruit at the base of the female flower. Hand pollinate if necessary.

Carrots and Beets Are Sweeter After A Frost

True. Frost sends the sugars down into the root.

Tie Frost Covers in Place

False. Drape loosely to let the heat rise up from the ground. Don't use plastic.

Change The Soil in Containers Every Year

True and False. Clean pot thoroughly, sterilize, and change soil if plants were diseased; otherwise just add amendments (compost, fertilizer, manure, etc.).

Put (Pottery, Sand, Gravel, Rocks, Cans, Packing Peanuts) In Your Pots To Improve Drainage

False. Use potting soil only, all the way to the bottom of the pot (which has drainage holes).

Hydrogels Mean Less Watering

False. Although the soil feels damp, they don't release water to the plant. Degraded gel byproducts are toxic.

Don't Water When The Sun is Shining

False. It won't burn the plant - the focal length is too short. Water when needed, at the base of the plant.

Loosen Clay Soil With Equal Parts Sand

False. Makes cement. Use compost as mulch on top and let nature do the work.

Pine Needles Make Soil Acidic

False. They aren't very acidic but do make a great mulch.

Coffee Grounds Lower Soil pH

False. The acid was in your cup. Add grounds to your compost pile. Use sulfur to acidify soil.

Bury Banana Peels to Increase Soil Potassium

False. Better to put them in the compost pile.

Add Sugar When You Plant Tomatoes To Make Them Sweeter

False. Sweetness comes from photosynthesis and depends on the variety.

Eggshells Prevent Blossom End Rot

Maybe, but there are many reasons a plant could be calcium deficient - usually too much of some other element tying up soil calcium. Irregular watering is more likely the reason.

Add Bonemeal When Planting Bulbs

False. Bulbs need nitrogen, not more phosphorus, to produce healthier foliage that provides the energy for next year's flowers.

Epsom Salts Cure Everything

False. Just plain false! Magnesium deficiency is rare in home gardens and adding more will leach into the watershed. Peer-reviewed studies show no improved cold-hardiness, no increased flowering, and no effect on roses.

Milk Prevents Black Spot on Roses

True. One part milk, two parts water; spray roses once a week.

Vinegar Is A Great Natural Weedkiller

False. Kills only the tops, plus everything else it touches; a higher concentration is dangerous. Adding detergent, salt, baking soda, etc. won't help.

Landscape Fabric Prevents Weeds

False. Water and oxygen don't penetrate well so soil is degraded. Weeds grow through or around the edges or eventually on top. Makes dividing or moving plants very difficult - roots become entangled above and below. Avoid it! No rock mulch either!!

Slugs Won't Crawl Across: Eggshells; Coffee Grounds; Chewing Tobacco; Copper

Only true for chewing tobacco, which killed them all.

Beer Kills Slugs

True. Sink jars in the soil with the beer at least an inch from the top so slugs fall in after imbibing.

Always Amend the Soil When Planting a Tree

False. Use the soil you dug out. Add compost on top, then mulch well 3-4" deep on top but 3-4" away from the trunk. Think donut, not volcano. Use natural materials to retain moisture, improve appearance, and restrict weeds.

Seal All Pruning Cuts

False. Traps moisture and prevents tree from forming a natural callous by itself.

Stake Trees For the First Year After Planting

Maybe. Bare root trees may need loose staking, maximum of one growing season. Swaying builds stronger roots; tightly staked trees become top heavy and are more likely to snap off or fall over later. Stake down low using flexible straps.

Don't Disturb the Tree Root Ball When Planting

False. Slice sides of root ball and X the bottom. New research says box cut or wash the roots so circling roots can be eliminated and to promote growth of new, vigorous roots.

#1 Myth: Everything You Read or Hear Is True

Question new or unusual recommendations. Use research-based, peer-reviewed sources for reliable information. Look for .edu sites

Acknowledgements:

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