

## What to do in your garden in May

TIP FROM THE TEST GARDEN

### Planting a wire basket

A hanging basket adds vertical interest to gardens.



**1** Soak sphagnum moss or coco fiber in water. Pack it, from inside wire basket, working between wires to make an inch-thick lining extending an inch above the rim.



**2** Fill a third of the basket with potting mix, and make evenly spaced holes in the moss just above soil level. Push plants from cell-packs into the holes (from outside) so roots sit on soil. Add soil to cover roots.



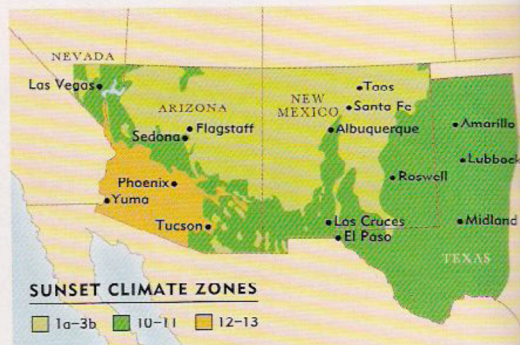
**3** Continue planting and adding soil in layers. Finish by filling soil to the rim and planting the surface. Keep soil moist.

### PLANTING

□ **Palm trees.** *Sunset* climate zones 10–13: Many of the most striking desert-adapted palms are also nicely proportioned for smaller yards, and with soil temperatures on the rise, May is the ideal month to plant them. Mexican blue palm (*Brahea armata*) grows slowly to about 35 feet tall and 10 to 15 feet wide. Blue-green pindo palm (*Bulua capitata*) has unusual arching branches and grows to about 15 feet tall and 10 to 15 feet wide. It is also hardy to 15°, making it one of the best palms for the intermediate and high desert. Windmill palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) is even hardier (withstanding temperatures to 10°) and grows to 30 feet tall and only 8 to 10 feet wide.

□ **Seasonal color.** Sow seeds or set out transplants of drought-tolerant flowers. Zones 1a–3b: Blackfoot daisy (*Melampodium leucanthum*), perennial blue flax, desert four o'clock, gayfeather, and prairie zinnia (*Zinnia grandiflora*). Zones 10–13: Desert senna (*Cassia covesii*), firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*), and golden dysodia (*Thymophylla pentachaeta*).

□ **Sticker-free trees.** Zones 10–13: Two small thornless trees in the legume family deserve attention. The tranquility tree (*Caesalpinia paraguayensis*), a South American native, has attractive beige, brown, and green mottled bark and a ferny-looking canopy. Cascalote (*Caesalpinia cacalaco* 'Smoothie') produces spikes of yellow pealike flowers through the winter. Unlike the species, 'Smoothie' has a stud-free trunk and thornless branch tips. Both trees are usually multitrunked and range from 15 to 30 feet in height and spread. If you can't find the trees at your local nursery, ask the buyer to order one for you from Mountain States Wholesale Nursery.



□ **Tomatoes.** Zones 12, 13: When summer heat descends on the low desert, most tomatoes stop bearing fruit. Not 'Ciudad Victoria.' This ancient heat-tolerant variety continues setting slightly flattened, currant-size tomatoes throughout the summer. Seeds are available from Native Seeds/SEARCH ([www.nativeseeds.org](http://www.nativeseeds.org) or 866/622-5561).

□ **Vegetables.** Sow seeds or set out transplants of chiles, cucumbers, melons, okra, peppers, summer and winter squash, and tomatillos. Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds ([www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com) or 417/924-8917) offers rare varieties, such as purple tomatillo.

### MAINTENANCE

□ **Collect flower seeds.** Prune dried bloom stalks from penstemon plants, then shake them upside down inside a plastic garbage bag or over a tarp. California poppy and Mexican gold poppy seed heads have a tendency to explode at the slightest touch. Before removing the pods, carefully place plastic bags over them. After harvesting the seeds, rake up and compost the dried plants.

□ **Create a watering schedule.** Zones 12, 13: To develop a custom watering schedule for your lawn or landscape plants, check out Water—Use It Wisely ([www.waterruseitwisely.com/waterguide](http://www.waterruseitwisely.com/waterguide)). The website also provides links to lists of low water use plants that are perfect for the Southwest.

□ **Fertilize citrus trees.** For good fruit development, fertilize this month with a packaged citrus food. —SCOTT CALHOUN

DAMIEY SCOGGIN (3)