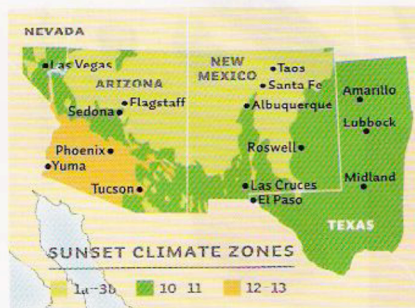


# What to do in your garden

## May



### Planting

**Figs** Sunset climate zones 11–13: Early in the month, set out containerized figs. Consider the delicious yellow-green skinned ‘Peter’s Honey’, a Sicilian import whose amber-colored, honey-flavored flesh makes it a favorite for eating fresh. Trees are available at local nurseries or by mail from Raintree Nursery ([www.raintreenursery.com](http://www.raintreenursery.com) or 360/496-6400).

**Native zinnia** Zones 3a–12: For an exceptionally drought-tolerant small groundcover that thrives even in hot planting strips and blooms on and off throughout the warm months, choose prairie zinnia (*Zinnia grandiflora*). The fine foliage and golden flowers mingle well with agave, prickly pear, and yucca. Look for prairie zinnia at nurseries or order from High Country Gardens ([www.highcountrygardens.com](http://www.highcountrygardens.com) or 800/925-9387).

**Seasonal color** Sow seeds or set out transplants of these tough and thrifty flowers. Zones 1a–3b: Plant ageratum, coreopsis, or gaillardia. Zones 10–13: Try Bright Lights cosmos, *Eupatorium greggii* ‘Boothill’, gaillardia, Mexican hat, portulaca, or zinnia.

**Southwest duo** Zones 10–12: The lacy white flowers of up-to-3-foot-tall mariola (*Parthenium incanum*) make a fine companion for the airy pink seed heads of bush Muhly (*Muhlenbergia porteri*), a petite ornamental grass that grows about 1½ feet tall and 3 feet wide. Both flower from late summer through fall. Set out now to get

plants established before bloom; provide full sun and good drainage. Look for plants at nurseries that specialize in natives, Albuquerque’s Bernardo Beach Native Plants ([www.bernardobeachnatives.com](http://www.bernardobeachnatives.com) or 505/345-6248) is one source.

**Vegetables** Sow seeds or set out transplants of chiles, cucumbers, eggplants, melons, okra, peppers, summer and winter squash, and tomatillos. Good seed sources include Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds ([www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com) or 417/924-8917) and Plants of the Southwest ([www.plantsofthesouthwest.com](http://www.plantsofthesouthwest.com) or 800/788-7333).

**Vines** Zones 10–11: Plant *Bignonia capreolata*, Lady Banks’ rose, *Parthenocissus* ‘1 hacienda Creeper’, silver lace vine, and trumpet creeper. Zones 12–13: Plant any of the above, plus bougainvillea, coral vine, and yellow morning glory (*Merremia*).

### Maintenance

**Collect wildflower seeds** Prune dried bloom stalks from penstemon plants and turn the stalks upside down inside a plastic garbage bag or over a tarp to collect seed. For California and Mexican gold poppies (*Eschscholzia mexicana*), place plastic bags over the seed heads while separating the pods from the plant (seed pods have a tendency to explode). After harvesting the seed, rake up the dried remains and discard.

**Control insects** Blast off aphids and spittlebugs with a jet of water. Control spider mites on evergreens by spraying with insecticidal soap.

**Fertilize** Memorial Day is a traditional date to feed citrus. This late-spring application is important for good fruit development. Purchase a citrus-and-avocado fertilizer and apply according to package directions. Give established palms their first feeding of the year with a fertilizer that’s specifically formulated for them. Feed cactus with a cactus fertilizer or an all-purpose type diluted to half-strength.

—SCOTT CALHOUN

### Tip from the test garden

**USE LANDSCAPE FABRIC** Help control weeds by laying landscape fabric. Unlike black plastic, it is porous and allows air and water to reach plant roots. Landscape fabric is best used around permanent plants that don’t need changing often.



**1.** Before planting, unroll fabric over prepared soil. Stake corners in place, or secure corners by burying them with soil. Using scissors or a utility knife, cut x’s in the fabric where you’ll set plants; fold back fabric.



**2.** Dig a hole for each rootball. Insert rootball through an x into the soil, press to firm the plant in place, then smooth down the fabric and cover it with a 2-inch layer of mulch such as fine fir bark.