

Week of May 7

By Sage Sassafras

THE DIRT ON DIRT

Aren't you just itching to get in the garden this year? Well, itching may be stretching it a bit because one gardener we know came back after a winter sojourn with patches of poison oak on her legs. Let's not talk about itching. But it does seem like the snow would never leave and then, in a blink of an eye, it's gone. Now we get to stare at our dirt and rack our brains to remember what is going to come up where.

Speaking of soil, my good friend, Henry Homeyer, has allowed me to share his two favorite recipes with you – one for garden soil and one for potting soil.

First, the garden soil, which is fabulous to use around newly planted additions to your garden. In a large wheelbarrow mix together equal parts of your garden dirt and composted manure. Add 2 cups Pro-Gro or similar organic fertilizer, 1 cup of rock phosphate (for good root development) and 1 cup greensand (for potassium to build strong cell walls and it's also great to lighten up clay soil.) And, voila, you have almost perfect soil for the garden. Just add worms and you're there.

For containers, Henry uses this recipe which he also mixes in a large wheelbarrow. To 2 heaping shovels of garden dirt add 1 small shovel of sand, 2 heaping shovels of compost and 2-3 shovels of fluffy material - peat moss, soil-less planting mix. (*Vermiculite and perlite are also fluffy, inert ingredients available in small bags at garden centers. The first absorbs water, the second doesn't, through water will adhere nicely to its exterior.*) Then he mixes in a cup of Pro-Gro or similar organic fertilizer. These are slow-release fertilizers so frequent watering won't wash it away (as happens with most chemical fertilizers).

And, voila, your garden plants and your container plants will thank you all summer long with just regular maintenance. They will repay you with luscious foliage and flowers for you to admire and enjoy.

Happy gardening and don't forget to check the website www.woodstockgardenclub.org. Remember that Mother Nature needs all the coddling we can give her.