

## Growing season is in full swing

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Garden season is in full swing, especially with the recent weather. I actually feel like I am a little bit ahead of the game.

On the other hand, I am also holding back somewhat. While the weather may seem to feel like it's time to plant those warm weather annuals such as geraniums, tomatoes and peppers, I am holding off for a few more weeks.

These plants don't like cold soil temperatures and won't tolerate a frost. The soil is actually pretty good right now in terms of moisture and temperature but that could change. My bet is we still have a few more frosts remaining to hit this spring.

If you can't wait, just make sure to protect the plants if frost is predicted. If temps drop and soil stays warm and wet, there is not a whole lot you can do except wait it out.

Cool season plants are thriving and in fact will last longer with normal early May temperatures.

If you have had problems in the past with European pine sawfly (EPS) on your mugho, red, Scotch or Jack pines you may want to be on the lookout for the early instars of these critters.

They just recently hatched in the Miami Valley and are beginning to feed along the edge of the needles. As they grow, they have the capacity to consume the entire needle.

The EPS doesn't usually kill a plant but leaves it looking rather funny. They feed on the older needles, leaving just the new growth. The result is a "poodle-like" tufted effect at the end of the branches.

The missing needles won't grow back so the plant remains looking a little odd.

One control option is to knock colonies of EPS from the plant into a bucket of soapy water. Or squish them!

There are pesticide options available but make sure that you use the right product. Look for a spray that controls sawflies (not caterpillars). Sprays that kill caterpillar pests won't kill sawflies.

And speaking of caterpillars, the Eastern tent caterpillars have hatched in this area as well. These are caterpillars that love plants in the rose family, particularly those in the cherry genus. Flowering cherries are one of their favorites, as well as crabapples, apples and more.

These caterpillars are prolific tent makers, creating their heavy silk nests in the crotch of the trees. They come out of the nests during warm weather and feed on the leaves.

They are sometimes confused with fall webworms that make their nests around the leaves at the end of the branch.

The best control method is to get them now before they really get cranked up. Again, the smash-method is pretty easy and effective. Pesticides aren't effective on older caterpillars so get them now.

They can be quite devastating to young or newly planted trees. Once these trees are defoliated, they need to expend energy to develop a new set of leaves. Continual defoliation can lead to death.