

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

Blog Website: [gardenprofessors.com](http://gardenprofessors.com)

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 80 proof (40%) liquor + 7 parts water or one part 70% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol + 10-11 parts water  
Start bulbs in plain water until growth begins, then replace with alcohol solution*

### **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.*

**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**

*Doubtful. There are many reasons a plant could be calcium deficient - usually too much of some other element tying up soil calcium. Irregular watering is mostly 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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