



Prince Edward County Master Gardeners

Gardening Tips and Tricks from Paul James

1. To remove the salt deposits that form on clay pots, combine equal parts white vinegar, rubbing alcohol and water in a spray bottle. Apply the mixture to the pot and scrub with a plastic brush. Let the pot dry before you plant anything in it.
 2. To prevent accumulating dirt under your fingernails while you work in the garden, draw your fingernails across a bar of soap and you'll effectively seal the undersides of your nails so dirt can't collect beneath them. Then, after you've finished in the garden, use a nailbrush to remove the soap and your nails will be sparkling clean.
 3. To prevent the line on your string trimmer from jamming or breaking, treat with a spray vegetable oil before installing it in the trimmer.
 4. Turn a long-handled tool into a measuring stick! Lay a long-handled garden tool on the ground, and next to it place a tape measure. Using a permanent marker, write inch and foot marks on the handle. When you need to space plants a certain distance apart (from just an inch to several feet) you'll already have a measuring device in your hand.
- More Tips and Tricks from Paul 04:28
- How can you use bubble wrap to keep your potted plants from stressing out? Find out from gardening expert Paul James.
5. To have garden twine handy when you need it, just stick a ball of twine in a small clay pot, pull the end of the twine through the drainage hole, and set the pot upside down in the garden. Do that, and you'll never go looking for twine again.
 6. Little clay pots make great cloches for protecting young plants from sudden, overnight frosts and freezes.
 7. To turn a clay pot into a hose guide, just stab a roughly one-foot length of steel reinforcing bar into the ground at the corner of a bed and slip two clay pots over it: one facing down, the other facing up. The guides will prevent damage to your plants as you drag the hose along the bed.
 8. To create perfectly natural markers, write the names of plants (using a permanent marker) on the flat faces of stones of various sizes and place them at or near the base of your plants.
 9. Got aphids? You can control them with a strong blast of water from the hose or with insecticidal soap. But here's another suggestion, one that's a lot more fun; get some tape! Wrap a wide strip of tape around your hand, sticky side out, and pat the leaves of plants infested with

aphids. Concentrate on the undersides of leaves, because that's where the little buggers like to hide.

10. The next time you boil or steam vegetables, don't pour the water down the drain, use it to water potted patio plants, and you'll be amazed at how the plants respond to the "vegetable soup."

11. Use leftover tea and coffee grounds to acidify the soil of acid-loving plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, gardenias and even blueberries. A light sprinkling of about one-quarter of an inch applied once a month will keep the pH of the soil on the acidic side.

12. Use chamomile tea to control damping-off fungus, which often attacks young seedlings quite suddenly. Just add a spot of tea to the soil around the base of seedlings once a week or use it as a foliar spray.

13. If you need an instant table for tea service, look no farther than your collection of clay pots and saucers. Just flip a good-sized pot over and top it off with a large saucer. And when you've had your share of tea, fill the saucer with water, and your "table" is now a birdbath.

14. The quickest way in the world to dry herbs: just lay a sheet of newspaper on the seat of your car, arrange the herbs in a single layer, then roll up the windows and close the doors. Your herbs will be quickly dried to perfection. What's more, your car will smell great.

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If you have a gardening question send it to us at: pecmastergardeners@gmail.com