Trees have had a tough go the last two summers. I had a meeting in Conway a week or two ago and noticed worms defoliating elms and oaks. So, watch your trees this spring and take control measures early. These worms will not kill the trees, but it will add some stress to them. This might be the final stress for some already weak trees.

Wrap-up planting your summer- and fall-flowering bulbs this month, such as dahlias, gladioli, cannas, and lilies. In a late spring you need to be careful and not plant too early but wait and plant after the soil temperature reaches 55 degrees F. If you have plans to plant a warm-season (zoysia or Bermuda) lawn, the best time to plant is now to mid June. If you are planting Bermuda by seed, use the hulled seed at this time of year (you can seed with unhulled seed in the fall). Wait until fall for cool-season grasses (fescue).

Continue spraying your fruit trees with a fungicide (Captan, etc.) every 7 to 10 days to provide the beautiful fruit you look forward to. Do not use any insecticides on the trees until less than 10% of the blooms remain - you certainly do not want to hurt your bee pollinators. The fungicide will have no effect on them.

Thus far, we have had ample rain which has been great. It only takes a few moist overcast day in the spring for azaleas to be hit with azalea leaf galls. If you had them in the past you most likely will see it again this spring. Watch for it and hand pick affected blooms and leaves off. Use a garden fungicide if the infection runs rampant.

Take softwood cuttings of plants like azalea, rhododendron, forsythia, clematis, chrysanthemum and geranium in late May if you have a misting system.

Aphid population can explode overnight in our spring gardens. Wilting or discolored new growth are common signs of aphids feeding. Spraying with insecticidal soap and blasting with a jet of water from the garden hose are two safe and easy controls. The key to keeping their numbers down is persistence. Check plants every few days for signs or re-infestation and treat as soon as possible.

Thin (pick off) excess fruits from apple, pear and peach trees to a ratio of one fruit per 6-8 inches of branch.

Stake tall growing perennials such as foxglove and true lilies to prevent them from lodging.

If your peonies fail to flower this month, it could be that they are planted too deep. They should be planted 2” deep and receive at least 6 hrs. of sunlight.

Direct seed sunflowers in your garden and stagger their planting by every week or two through July so you have flowers until frost.

As the days get hotter and your pansies show stress, remove them and replace with summer annuals.

Stalks of bearded, Siberian, and Japanese iris should be removed as flower fade.

You can selectively prune spring-flowering shrubs such as azalea, forsythia, weigela, lilac, beauty bush, and mockorange to control their growth or improve their shape as well as increase their bloom next year.