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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TRANSPLANTING INTO THE GARDEN

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North Idaho has a short growing season between expected frost dates. Thus, gardeners here often start plants from seed indoors or in a greenhouse, or purchase tender annuals from a nursery to extend the season. To get a healthy start in the garden, these plants should undergo a transition period to become acclimated, or “hardened off”, to outdoor conditions, where temperature variations, strong sunlight, and wind prevail. A few days before planting in the garden, bring them outside during the daytime, but protect them during the nights, which can be much colder. The plants will adapt to the outdoor environment more easily if exposed gradually.

After deciding location, transplant on a cool, cloudy day, or in the cool evening or morning air. Feel the soil where the young plants will be. It should be well hydrated, but not soggy, and should crumble easily in the hand. Dig a hole about the depth of the pot containing the new plant and loosen the soil in the surrounding area to make it easier for young roots to penetrate. Try to avoid disturbing the roots of the plant. To remove from the pot, secure the seedling between two fingers and turn the pot upside down. The soil and roots will usually separate from the pot easily and retain its shape. Now, place the young plant in the hole and gently fill in. In most cases, the crown of the plant should be at the same level as it was in the pot. Some plants, such as tomatoes, can benefit from planting deeper. Remove the bottom leaves and bury the stem several inches for a more robust tomato; additional roots will form along the buried stem.

Finally, water the new plants well to settle them into the soil.

Ann Warwick has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 1996.

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