

SHAMROCKS

The shamrock, or oxalis, is the traditional plant for celebrating St. Patrick's Day. In all likelihood, the florist's shamrock is not a true shamrock. That is not to say, however that you are not growing Irish shamrocks. The Irish shamrock is actually a whiter clover. This is the white, pale pink, or purple flowered plant that grows in many lawns. Beloved by bees and children in search of the elusive 4-leaf clover, this plant is considered by some adults to be an invasive weed. Other people feel it is an important part of their diverse lawn system.

The florist's plant is usually an oxalis houseplant. The most commonly seen oxalis has yellow buttercup flowers and light green, tri-lobed leaves which fold up at night. If it looks familiar to you it may be because it is also known as wood sorrel. Wood sorrel is commonly found wild in Washtenaw County.

Other greenhouse varieties of oxalis are more refined. These are bulb or tuber grown plants with large showy yellow, pink, white, or purple fragrant flowers. Oxalis grows best in a sunny location with average household temperatures. Keep the soil moist but not wet. Fertilize blooming plants frequently with a high phosphorus fertilizer.

Don't be alarmed if the leaves of tuberous oxalis die down in mid-winter, as they often go dormant during this period. Reduce watering until new leaves appear.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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