

Spring Gardening Tips



February

Get started by cleaning up the garden; rake leaves and cut back any perennials still standing. Do most of your pruning now; however, do not prune anything in bloom or with flower buds. Spray fruit trees and roses with dormant oil and lime sulphur to reduce the risk of diseases forming later.

March & April

Be aware of the weather, and if the forecast calls for cold temperatures or frost, protect your hanging baskets and planters by covering them or bringing them inside. Any plants you buy from a greenhouse need to be hardened off - place them outside during the day and bring them in at night or place them outside in a sheltered spot for a few days before planting.

Pruning in Spring

Most pruning should be done in February, except with early flowering shrubs which can be trimmed back



after they finish blooming. Cut off broken or damaged limbs and branches from your trees and shrubs. Cut seed heads off your bulbs but leave the foliage alone until it turns brown. Lightly prune groups B & C (large flowering types) Clematis if they start to get too big. Cut down deciduous grasses like Miscanthus & Ribbon grass. However, take care with cutting back evergreen grasses as they can take years to grow back - try combing out the dead leaves instead by hand or with a rake. It is also time for pruning Hydrangeas: lightly prune above a healthy set of buds after the threat of frost is over.

Primulas & Winter Pansies



Now is the time to replant your winter flowering Primulas and Pansies in a moist, part sun environment such as a woodland

border. Primulas are well partnered with Hostas or Astilbe, for as the Primula goes dormant these perennials come up and cover them and next spring as they die down your Primulas are set to re-bloom.

Trim back your Pansies and Violas, pinch off the seed heads, and move them to a moist, part shade area for fall blooming.

What can you plant?

Once the frost has passed it is safe to plant perennials, shrubs, summer flowering bulbs, sweet peas and hardened off annuals. Summer flowering bulbs should be planted in succession (every 1 or 2 weeks) to extend the blooming time. Bulbs should be planted in groups of 5 or more to give a better visual effect. Small summer bulbs are good for planting in difficult areas such as under evergreen trees or around tree roots.

Lift and divide your perennials and thick clumps of bulbs. Also place peony rings, tomato cages and stakes in now so the plants grow up around their supports, allowing for a more natural look.

Planting Trees & Shrubs

Spring or fall is the perfect time to plant new trees and shrubs since the soil is moist; therefore,



new plantings require less watering. However, don't expect newly planted trees and shrubs to flower for the first year or two. They need to grow a strong root system before they can flower and may even lose their current buds due to the stress incurred during transplanting. Ensure you loosen the root ball before transplanting and do not plant too deep. Any soil (e.g. potting soil) that you add at planting should be mixed in with the existing soil.

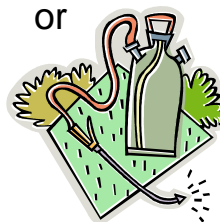
Plant Combinations

Use bright colors for beds you see from a distance, and whites or light colors for shaded areas. Containers and beds look great when planted with either contrasting colors or similar hues and with plants of varying heights and leaf textures. Err on over- vs. under-planting and use

larger plants to give instant visual impact. Try planting a Clematis vine on an established tree or shrub.

Fertilizing

Starting mid - April you can use water soluble fertilizers at a half rate weekly. Amend soil by adding compost or manure to help increase moisture retention and to help break up heavy soil. Do not pile the compost or manure on top but work it into the soil when it is not too wet.



Use an acidifying fertilizer on Rhododendrons, Dogwoods, Camellias and Evergreens. Using an acidifying fertilizer on Hydrangea will intensify blue colors, and using lime will intensify pink colors.

Mix bone meal into the soil for new plantings as this will stimulate root growth and help establish the plant sooner. Ensure it is mixed in well, for placing plant roots directly on top of the bone meal can burn roots.

Avoid fertilizing diseased or insect-

infested plants as this can worsen the problem; fertilization prompts new growth which is more susceptible to infection.

Spring Lawn Tips

Aerate your lawn (with pitch fork, aerator, etc.), top dress it with sand, and over-seed where necessary. Rake out any moss after a period of wet weather and apply moss killer if a spell of dry weather is forecasted. Since acidic soil hampers the uptake of nutrients, add lime to your lawn to help it absorb any fertilizers you may apply. Spread weed & feed early in the spring when weeds are actively re-growing. Using it later in the season is less helpful since the herbicide in weed & feed is less effective in combating weeds during hot, dry spells. Be careful not to hit your flower beds while applying weed & feed since the herbicide can kill or stunt your plants.

