

GETTING YOUR GARDEN READY FOR SPRING

PREPARATIONS

Get a soil test.
Soil preparation -- add lime, compost, etc. as needed.
Mulch beds with a light hand.
Turn your compost pile.
Sharpen tools.
Clean out any old leaf debris from last season from your growing beds.
Cut back and clear out the last of your perennial beds and ornamental grasses.
Clean leaves and debris from your water garden.
Build a raised bed for vegetables. Add lots of manure and compost.
Edge garden beds.
Remove Ivy, Pachysandra, and other vine-like groundcover from under shrubs.
Fertilize new growth (lightly).
Water shrubs and trees deeply during any dry spells.
Make compost tea and use on seedlings.
Ensure new seedlings do not dry out by installing a drip-irrigation system.

PRECAUTIONS

Avoid walking on and compacting wet soil in the garden.
Do not be alarmed if your pond turns green from algae bloom, this is natural until your water plants fill the surface area. Add a barley ball to combat it for now.
Cut your Daffodils for indoor bouquets, but do not combine daffs with other flowers in one vase. They give off a toxic substance they may kill your other blooms off prematurely.
Weed by hand to avoid disturbing newly forming roots.

PRUNE

Cut some branches (forsythia, quince, bittersweet, redbud, willow, etc.) for forcing indoors.
Prune grapevines.
Prune fruit trees as their buds are swelling. Check for dead and diseased wood to prune out. Cut a few branches for indoor forcing, if desired.
Cut back and clear out the last of your perennial beds.
Prune winter damage on evergreens.
Prune flowering shrubs, such as forsythia, lilacs, and azaleas, when they finish blooming.

PLANT

~ ORNAMENTALS

Transplants small trees and shrubs.
Plant and prune roses.
Plant a tree for Arbor Day or Earth Day. Arbor Day comes on different dates in different states. In our area it is the first Wednesday in April for Maryland, Virginia has it on the second Friday in April, and DC has it on the last Friday in April. In addition, many local groups and towns have their own celebrations.
Start some seeds -- especially try flowering annuals like impatiens, marigolds, nasturtium, and petunias.
Divide perennials. Pot up extras to give away at plant swaps.

~ EDIBLES

Start tomato, peppers, and eggplant seeds indoors.
Put up trellises and teepees for peas, climbing beans, etc.
Plant peas, potatoes, beets, turnips, radish, cabbage, mustard greens, onion sets, carrots, and kale.
Pick peas often to encourage the plants to produce more.
If you started seeds last month, thin them and start the hardening off process.
Thin lettuce seedlings and plant more seeds in new rows. (You can eat the seedling greens you pull.)
Sow beans and corn directly outdoors.
Start carrots, turnips, and parsnips in well-draining beds or in deep containers.
Start herbs from seed or cuttings.
Do not set out seedlings or tender annuals until after Mother's Day (traditional last frost-free date for our entire area).

PESTS and PROBLEMS

Set out traps for mice, moles, and voles.
Walk your garden – look for early signs of fungal disease.
Hand pick bagworms off junipers and smash them.
Hand pick cabbage worms from broccoli and other cabbage family plants.
Keep cutworms off newly planted edible seedlings by surrounding them with a collar cut from a plastic bottle or cardboard tube.
Put row covers over vulnerable crops – remove cover to allow for pollinating once they set flowers.

POT UP

Repot root-bound houseplants and start fertilizing them.
Buy an indoor plant to liven up your office space. Try an orchid or African violet.
Buy or check on your stored summer bulbs (such as dahlias and caladiums). Pot them and start to water, if you want to give them an early start on the season.

PLAY

Start or update your garden journals.
Set aside a few hours each weekend for attending garden shows and tours.
Read a good gardening book or magazine.
Feed birds and provide nesting materials (try dryer lint) as well as houses for the start of their family season.

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