

What To Do In Your Garden ... And When

By Lyn Jekowsky

MARCH

- Working the soil when it is too wet will ruin its structure for the season. How to tell? Pick up a handful of soil, squeeze it. If it doesn't crumble easily, it is too wet.
- Mulch depletes the soil of nitrogen.
- A good article it to read is [10 Things to Do To Prepare for Spring](#) from *The Enchanted Gardens Design* website.



→ → → Test your soil pH every 2-5 years.

There are easy methods to do this at home.

See the [How To Test Soil Acidity/Alkalinity Without A test Kit](#) article from *The Spruce* on how to do the testing - either with or without a kit.

“Life begins the day you start a garden.” ~ Chinese Proverb

Week 1

- Plant [Snow Drops](#).
- [Butterfly Bush](#) - You can now prune this to the ground. This allows extra root growth and reserves energy to quickly support vigorous spring growth.

Week 2

- Fertilize spring bulbs with an all-natural organic fertilizer as their tips emerge. I.e. Miracle-Gro 24-8-16.
- Johnny Appleseed Day – March 11, 2024

Week 4

- [Crocuses](#) appear.
- Force [Forsythia](#), [Pussy Willows](#) and [Cherry Blossoms](#)
- [Hydrangeas](#):
 - Carefully remove dead branches. If pruning, cut down branch to just above the first live bud.
 - Remove last year's dead buds
 - Put down 2-3" of mulch or manure
 - Check soil pH. Fertilize accordingly but do not fertilize until leaves of Hydrangeas start to show.
- [Clematis](#): Prune Clematis that bloom on new wood. For the late bloomers, prune back to 12-14 inches in March/April when they are dormant.
- [Rose of Sharon](#): Prune now, before new growth appears, which produces current year's blooms
- [Butterfly Bush](#): Don't prune Butterfly Bush until you see green buds on the stem (March). These require full sun. They are relatively draught tolerant and fertilizer is not needed. (Fertilizer encourages foliage at the expense of the flowers).



Cont....

- **Rhododendrons:**
 - Carefully remove dead branches, cut down branches to just above 1st live bud.
 - Check soil pH. If too alkaline, amend soil with Muracid, otherwise fertilize with complete fertilizer. ie. Miracle-Gro 24-8-16
 - When buds swell, then again when leaves emerge, sprinkle 1 level tablespoon of granular slow release fertilizer at the foot of the plant, around the base and water in.
- **Dahlias:**
 - Start in pots inside if you wish. Plant 2-3” deep in potting soil. Keep damp but don’t water until sprouts show.
 - If sprout is >2” pinch off to 1” before planting in the garden.
 - Bring plant outside to “harden off” in shade before planting (in May)
 - I grow mine in the basement under 8 hours of light until ready to plant outside.
- Prune fruit trees and summer blooming shrubs while they are still dormant.
- Once daytime temps are consistently 50 degrees F or more, clean out perennial beds.
- Replant heaved plants. Plant heaving is due to temperature changes during the winter. It causes plants which have shallow roots or were planted late in the fall to rise in the ground thus exposing their roots. To prevent plant heaving, in the fall, cover the plants with evergreen boughs which keeps the soil at an even temp through the winter.
- Remove last year’s growth from **Hellebores, Epimedium and Ginger**
- Prune brown foliage on fir trees to the living tissue (where you see green on the stem).

APRIL

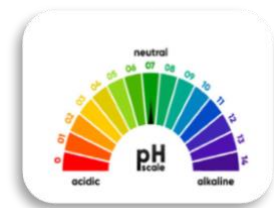
General Notes about Fertilizers

→ → → **Test your soil pH every 2-5 years.**



The three main components of commercial fertilizers are:
 NPK – Nitrogen, Phosphorus (Potash), and Potassium.

Nitrogen drives leaf development.
Phosphorus is vital for root development and flower and fruit growth.
Potassium is for healthy cell development.



- Balanced formulas like a 10-10-10 may be detrimental to soil and plant health as it may contain too much of a nutrient.
- Most perennials and annuals, at any stage of plant growth, do well with a complete balanced fertilizer.
- Don’t fertilize when a heavy rainfall is expected as the fertilizer will most like be lost in run-off or leaching.
- *The Spruce* has a great article called [Your Guide to Understanding Fertilizer Numbers](#) that can answer all your fertilizing questions.

“To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body but the soul”. ~ Alfred Austin

Week 1

- Give lawn a good raking.
- Daffodils and Hyacinths are in full bloom
- Feed indoor plants
- Fertilize **Helebore**s and sprinkle Epsom salts around. Use a complete balanced fertilizer, like 10-10-10

Week 2

- Feed **peonies** with 5-10-5 fertilizer with 1 cup of lime.

Week 3

- Feed and lime all gardens
- Edge gardens.
- See **hydrangea** note in March. Fertilize.



Week 4

- **Planting dahlias.**
 - Best to wait until Mid-May. Require full sun. Use plain dirt (no additives, fertilizers, etc). If soil is soggy, add peat moss or sand to hole. Ground temperature needs to be at 60 degrees F. Put in well-drained soil. Hole should be 4-6" deep. Work small handful of bonemeal into hole, lay tuber sideways. If tuber sprout > 2-3", trim/pinch back to 1". Stake plants now so damage won't happen if you stake later. ******* Don't water until sprouts appear above ground unless there has not been any rain or there is excessive heat. Apply snail and slug bait immediately and throughout the growing season. Don't cover with mulch at planting as ground needs to warm up. Average blooming time is 90 days.
 - Once above ground, water deeply 3-4 times per week for 1 hour with a soaker hose or sprinkler.
 - Apply processed, bagged cow/steer manure anytime to enrich the soil after the dahlias have come up. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers such as 5-10-10. No Miracle-Gro as it is high in nitrogen. High nitrogen causes weak stems, huge green plants, small stems. Apply at planting and 3-4 weeks later.
 - If yellowing leaves or slow to grow, you may use standard fertilizer 1-2 times per season.
 - Top plants (cut off top center bud/leaves) when over 3 feet tall to promote shorter, fuller plants.

"Where the flower blooms, there is hope." ~ Lady Bird Johnson

MAY

Week 2

- Dead-head **Daffodils**
- Finish edging gardens.
- Cut back **Forsythia** after it has bloomed.
- **Dahlias** – Holes in leaves are signs of slugs. Add more slug and snail bait and check throughout the season.



Week 3

- **May 23, 2024 is the Full Flower moon.** According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, it is sage to plant after its occurrence. My Mom planted accordingly. With planet warming, nature has jumped ahead a week or so.
- All planting should be completed and gardens mulched.



Notes: Memorial Day

- Sprinkle slugs with table salt.
- When watering the garden, you need to soak to a depth of 4". Sprinkling causes roots to go toward the surface and plants don't do well. Use Soaker hoses.

JUNE

Week 1

- Leave lawn at 3/4 inch
- Weed

Week 2

- Liquid feed herbs and veggies. Use something like Miracle-Gro 24-8-16
- Fertilize Peonies with 5-10-5



Week 3

- Fertilize annuals and perennials with Miracle-Gro or something similar to 24-8-16
- Fertilize shrubs.
- Weed, weed, weed.

Week 4

- Cut off dead blossoms from flowering shrubs so its energy goes to healthy new growth and is not wasted on seed production.
- Cut flowers between 3-5 PM, when leaves and flowers have most abundant food supply. Plunge stems into water immediately and let them sit for a few hours before arranging.
- Slugs can be hand-picked off with a flashlight at night.
- To dry herbs in the microwave, layer 1 cup of herbs brushed clean, not washed between 2 paper towels. Microwave on high for 2-3 minutes. If not dry, add 30 seconds.

JULY

- Stay on top of weeds.
- Perennials – water in the early morning, never evening, once a week to depth of 6".
- Avoid wetting leaves as that might lead to mildew. Use soaker hoses.
- Dahlias – To cut flowers, cut down stem 12" or more and place in 2-3" of very hot water. Allow to cool at least 1 hour to set blooms. Do not use a glass bucket for this.
- Neem Oil – Spray on veggies, all flowers (particularly dahlias) to get rid of bugs like spider mites. It is a natural insecticide made from the seeds of the Azadirachta Indica Tree. They are non-toxic to humans and animals. The odor repels bugs and deters fungus. Dilute 1 teaspoon of cold pressed neem oil in 1 quart of very hot water, shake well, mist tops and underneath leaves. Repeat once a week, then every 2 weeks throughout growing season if pest free.



AUGUST

- Weed!
- Remove dead flower heads as soon as they are finished. Don't cut green leaves and stems as carbs are forming in the green cells.
- Fill in bare spots in perennial garden with annuals.
- Good time to divide overgrown clumps of daylilies that don't bloom. Replant using Osmocote or Miracle-Gro.
- Note: SuperPO4 is used for root growth.
- **Daisies and Coreopsis** – Cut back lightly.
- Fertilize annuals and perennials.
- **Azaleas, Rhododendrons & Peonies** – lightly top dress with SuperPO4
- **Herbs** - cut herbs in early morning to capture the essential oils. Fasten stems with rubber bands, hang them upside down to dry in a dark place.
- The Spruce has a good article called [How to Dry Herbs in the Microwave](#) (bay leaves, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme).



“The hum of bees is the voice of the garden”. ~ unknown

SEPTEMBER

- Plant bulbs.
- Plant **Forsythia** and **Rhododendrons**.
- Begin to put down gardens.
- Fertilize perennials if you haven't done so in August.
- Seed lawn if needed.



OCTOBER

- If it has been dry and below 60 degrees F all day and the temperature drops to 55 degrees just before sundown and there is no wind, a first frost is likely.
- Put flower gardens to bed. Cut back all perennials.
- Mulch all gardens with fallen leaves.
- Interesting article from Hone Grown Food and Garden: [Should You Fertilize Your Garden in the Fall](#)

- **Dahlias:**

- Two weeks after a killing frost, dig up Dahlia tubers to overwinter (mid-November). Cut stalk off to about 6 inches and gently remove from the hole. Remove mother tuber, save only tubers that are in good condition.
- Divide tuber clumps. Each division must contain part of the crown that has at least 1 or 2 eyes.
- The crown is at the base of the stem and contains eyes where new growth emerges.
- Let divisions sit for a day to callous over.
- Hang upside down to dry for 2 weeks.
- Another option: when dry, sprinkle sulfur dust (fungicide) onto tubers before storage.
- Storage: Line a cardboard box with newspaper. Then add 2 inches of peat moss. Slightly moisten the peat moss with a spray bottle. Store the box in a dark area like a basement, around 50 degrees F.
- **** Check periodically during the winter.** If overly dry, spritz peat moss with a spray bottle of water.
- If tuber is mushy, discard it so it won't infect other tubers.
- Label before storing.
- The Spruce provides this article: [How to Store Dahlia Tubers for Winter.](#)



“It is at the edge of a petal that love awaits”. ~ William Carlos Williams

Web site references:

March

- 1) <https://www.enchantedgardensdesign.com/blog/2015/2/6/gardening-in-late-march-10-things-you-can-do-to-prepare-for-spring>
- 2) <https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-test-soil-acidity-alkalinity-without-a-test-kit-1388584#:~:text=Add%201%2F2%20cup%20of,it%20has%20an%20alkaline%20pH.>

April

- 1) <https://www.thespruce.com/fertilizer-numbers-7973985>

August

- 1) <https://www.thespruceeats.com/how-to-dry-herbs-in-the-microwave-2216927>

October

- 1) <https://homegrownfoodandflowers.com/should-you-fertilize-your-garden-in-the-fall/>
- 2) <https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-store-dahlia-tubers-for-winter-2132882>