

GARDENING IN APRIL

GARDEN TIP

- Be prepared to protect tender plants from any late frosts.
- Be prepared for a dry, hot summer by applying mulch to help keep the soil cool and to retain moisture. Put drip irrigation or soaker hoses under the mulch.
- If you are vegetable gardening for the first time, don't overdo it. Unless you are feeding a family of 6, or planning to share your bounty with others, be realistic. Four bean plants will provide enough green beans for one person to eat fresh. Four plants will fit in one square foot. Start with a small area, or start by planting in a flower bed that is already prepared. Use lettuce or spinach as a flower bed border. Make your garden a manageable size so you spend more time harvesting produce and less time weeding.

PLANT

- If starting flowers from seed, plant celosia, marigold, portulaca, zinnia and other warm-season annuals in the prepared beds now. Keep the seeded areas moist until seeds germinate. Thin out as soon as they are big enough to transplant, and move those surplus plants to other areas. For instant color, purchase started annuals. Select short, compact plants. Any flowers or flower buds should be pinched to give plants an opportunity to become established.
- Plant tomatoes, peppers, corn, beans, squash, okra, cucumbers, melons and other warm-season vegetables. Black-eyed peas can be planted in July, which allows you to do some rotation planting. For instance, after the squash bugs get the squash, pull the plants out and plant black-eyed peas in that bed.
- Plant turf grass: Bermuda from seed, and St. Augustine and Zoysia from sod.

PRUNE

- Prune those spring-flowering shrubs like forsythia, Japanese quince, Indian hawthorn, azaleas, early white Spirea and honeysuckle after they finish blooming.
- Use lopping shears or hand pruners (no hedge trimmers). Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune, and avoid excessive cutting except where necessary to control size. Start with any long shoots that stick out beyond the main plant. Take the stem off from the base of the plant or flush with the remaining stem. Continue with the next longest shoot until the plant is the size and shape you want. Apply an all-nitrogen fertilizer (it should include 50% slow-release nitrogen) to promote good stem growth this spring for a beautiful display next year.
- Pinch the tips off of new blackberry canes to encourage branching and produce more compact plants.

FERTILIZE

- Turf grass: A soil test will usually show that clay soils need only nitrogen, while sandy soils will require a high nitrogen fertilizer at a 4-1-2 ratio, for example. For both, half or more of the nitrogen should be in a slow-release form.
- For trees, shrubs, vegetables, and flowerbeds use the same type fertilizer used on the lawn. Be sure it does not contain any weed killer such as a weed and feed product, which is not recommended at all. For acid-loving plants like azaleas, gardenias, wisteria, etc., use an iron/sulfur soil-acidifier product. Keep this off of masonry or painted surfaces because it could stain them.
- For roses, use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as new growth starts, then use ammonium sulfate, or other high nitrogen source, every 4 to 6 weeks.

WATCH FOR

- Bagworms on junipers and other narrow-leaved evergreens. Hand pick light infestations. Sevin dust or spray should be applied while the insects and the bags are about one-half inch in length. Organic remedies include sprays of Bt or Spinosad. Tearing open the bags allows birds and wasps to feed on the worms.
- Check new tender growth for aphids. Large infestations should be controlled. Try a strong spray from the garden hose first. If you decide to use pesticides, always follow label instructions.

OTHER TASKS

- Save any leftover flower or vegetable seeds by closing the packet with tape or paper clips and storing in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator.
- Check sprinkler heads for cleaning, realigning, repairs or replacement.

- Spring weather is unpredictable; so continue to be prepared to protect tender plants early in the month.
- Wait to cut the foliage on daffodils until the greenery turns brown, which will be in a month or so. The stem and leaves continue to produce carbohydrates that will strengthen the bulb for spectacular blooms next spring. Since most tulips are annuals in our area, go ahead and cut that greenery back.

For horticulture questions call 903-583-7453 or email fanninmastergardeners@gmail.com.

Like us on Facebook - Fannin County Master Gardeners

Helpful sites <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/>

<https://txmg.org/fannin/>