

Garden Calendar

(provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension, Putnam County)

April

- Plant trees and shrubs. At this time you can plant either balled-and-burlapped or container-grown plants. Dig a hole only as deep as the root ball but three to five times as wide, to leave room to backfill with soil. Or, as the old gardener's adage goes, "Don't dig a five-cent hole for a ten-dollar plant." Remove synthetic burlap, natural burlap, and wire cages before planting. Do not amend the soil in the planting hole.
- Start Caladiums, tuberous Begonias, Cannas, Elephant Ears (*Alocasia* ssp.) and Dahlias indoors in pots so they will be ready to take off when you plant them out in mid-May. Start these tender perennials six to eight weeks before the safe plant-out date.
- Stay off the grass when it's frost covered. Avoiding driving equipment over lawns in spring when they are soggy; too much pressure will compact the soil and inhibit the healthy root growth.
- Prune Type 2 Clematis: All first flowering comes from last season's ripening stems (Arctic Queen, Claire de Lune, Crystal Fountain, Guernsey Cream, Josephine, Kilian Donahue, Multi-Blue, Nelly Moser, Niobe). Look for swelling leaf buds beginning to show, and cut off all dead material above these. Stems are fragile and easily broken. Be sure all growth is tied to the trellis lightly.
- If you did not do it in the previous year (late summer after fruiting is best), thin "floricane" or summer bearing bramble plantings to increase air circulation. Thin to 4 canes per square (or lineal) foot. And top those canes to make picking more convenient and safe. Do this in dry weather to minimize the chance of disease organisms invading the open wounds. Cut "primocane" or fall-bearing bramble plants to the ground in early spring. For more information see:
<http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/berry/production/pdfs/rasppruning.pdf>
- Start seeds of tomatoes and many other vegetables indoors under fluorescent lights or in bright windows. Remember to read the seed packet thoroughly for germination information: each have specific requirements. Some plants germinate best with gentle heat, others with light, and some even require darkness to germinate.
- Plant parsley, radish, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards and lettuce outside in early April.
- Prune Roses at bud-break when it is clear which parts of the plant have made it through the winter.
- Prune small trees and shrubs. Remove dead branches, crossing or rubbing branches, and prune to maintain a good shape and good branch structure. Be careful not to cut into the branch collar. Do not paint the wounds. For more specifics, refer to:
<http://hdl.handle.net/1813/3573>
- Prune spring-flowering ornamental shrubs (forsythia, quince, lilac) and other immediately after blooming. They will set new flower buds later in the summer/early fall. If they need drastic rejuvenation, cut back one-third of the oldest, thickest stems to eight inches: this is especially useful with old lilacs.

- Remove and compost heavy accumulations of fallen leaves. Remember, tender foliage may already be emerging from perennial rootstocks, so care is needed, especially when cleaning around astilbe and ferns.
- Renew or rejuvenate overgrown summer and fall-blooming shrubs by pruning. Wait to prune spring-blooming shrubs until after flowering.
- Scallions, shallots, and onions can be planted in mid-April.
- Plant bare-root roses when the soil is thawed and drained. When planting grafted roses be sure to place the graft union at soil level.