

Parker County Master Gardener Association

Garden Tips - April

General yard:

Check your houseplants to see if they need to be repotted into the next larger size pot with fresh soil. Trim and prune overgrown or leggy houseplants to encourage them to fill out.

Do not forget your container plants, they need to be fertilized with diluted complete-and-balanced, water-soluble fertilizer.

Start weeding early in the flower garden. Early competition with small plants can delay flowering. Mulch will discourage weed growth and make those that do come through easier to pull.

Soil purchased for use in beds, low areas and containers should be examined closely. Often, nut sedge and other weeds, nematodes and soil borne disease are brought into the yard through contaminated soil sources.

Check new tender growth for aphids. A few can be tolerated, but large numbers should be controlled. Always follow label instructions on approved pesticides for control. Washing them off with a strong spray of water may be all that is necessary for adequate control. Try washing them off before going to the spray.

Many flower or vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing in a sealed glass jar in a cool, dark location. You may choose to add a small packet of desiccant or powdered milk at the bottom of the glass to prevent moisture from forming.

Lawn:

St. Augustine grass and Bermuda grass can be planted in mid-April. Apply broadleaved weed killer, as needed, to eliminate existing non-grassy weeds in lawn. To eliminate fleas and ticks in the lawn, use an insecticide. Caution: use products from the veterinarian on the pets.

Fertilize lawns in early April with a 4-1-2 or 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer. Check your soil test because you may find you only need a pure nitrogen fertilizer.

Flowers:

For instant color, purchase started annual plants. Select short, compact plants. Any flowers or lower buds should be pinched to give plants an opportunity to become established.

Removing spent flowers, trimming back excessive growth and applying fertilizer to an established annual bed can do wonders towards rejuvenating and extending the life of the planting.

Warm-season annual flowers can be planted now. Most reliable types include begonias, caladiums, celosias, coleus, copper plant, Dahlberg daisies, gomphrenas, impatiens, moss rose, purslane and trailing lantanas.

Tropical annuals can be planted late in the month including allamandas, bananas, bougainvilleas, caladiums, firebush, Mexican heather, purple fountain grass, tropical hibiscus and others.

Now is a good time to plant summer and fall-flowering perennials, examples are artemesias, bee balm, cannas, coneflowers, daylilies, fall asters, lambs ear, lythrum, perennial salvias and shasta daisies.

Seeds of amaranthus, celosia, cosmos, marigold, portulaca, zinnia and other warm-season annuals can be sown directly in the beds where they are to grow. Keep seeded areas moist until seeds germinate. Thin out as soon as they are large enough to transplant.

Surplus plants can be transplanted to other areas.

“Pinch” back new shoots of chrysanthemums, coleus, copper plants and fall asters with your fingers. By removing the growing shoots, you will encourage side branches so they will not become so tall and lanky.

As soon as azaleas have finished flowering, apply an acid-type fertilizer at the rate recommended. Do not over fertilize, as azalea roots are near the surface and damage can occur. You should water thoroughly after fertilizing.

Treat canna leafrollers with systemic insecticide. To help the spray hold onto the cannas’ leaf, add one or two drops of liquid detergent to the insecticide.

Fruit & Nut:

Continue the fruit spray programs with insecticide or fungicide according to the schedule from your county Extension office

Vegetables:

Warm-season vegetables such as beans, corn, cucumbers, melons, peppers, squash and tomatoes can be planted this month. Be ready to protect them in case of a late cold spell.

Herbs can be planted into beds or containers this month. They make great additions to your garden.

Use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (“B.t.”) to eliminate loopers and other chewing pests on cole crops, other vegetables and landscape plants.

Control snails, slugs and pillbugs with bait or contact insecticide.

Trees & Shrubs:

Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines soon after flowering. Keep the natural shape of the plant in mind as you prune and avoid excessive cutting except when necessary to control size. This will maintain good form and will encourage vigorous regrowth.

Apply high-nitrogen (3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio) fertilizer to spring-flowering shrubs after bloom, also to summer-flowering shrubs, vines, evergreens and shade trees. The same fertilizer can be used on St. Augustinegrass, Bermudagrass and other warm-season grasses. As much as half of the nitrogen, should be in slow-release form.

Use root-stimulator plant food on newly planted trees and shrubs. Repeat monthly for balled-and-burlapped and bare-rooted plants.

If you detect iron-chlorosis (yellowed leaves with dark green veins, most prominent on newest growth), apply iron and sulfur material to the affected plants.

Watch new growth of photinias for fungal leaf spot. Control with appropriate fungicide. Remove old leaves as they fall to help keep the disease from transferring back to the shrubs.

It will soon be time for bagworms to attack junipers and other narrow-leafed evergreens. Control measures, such as Sevin dust or spray, should be applied while the insects and bags are about one half inch in length.

Roses:

Roses can be planted now.

Climbing hybrid tea roses may be pruned as soon as they complete blooming. Prune climbing roses to remove weak branches entirely and cut vigorous canes back by 30 to 40%.

Roses have high fertilizer requirements. For most soils, use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as the new growth starts, then use ammonium sulfate or other high nitrogen source, every 4 to 6 weeks, usually just as the new growth cycle starts following a flowering cycle. For organic sources use cottonseeds, rotted manures or alfalfa meal.

Continue to spray rose varieties susceptible to black spot, using a spray containing triforine (Funginex). Use every 7 to 10 days. Black spot causes black-brown spots encircled by bright yellow tissues. Include systemic insecticide to prevent thrips. They cause buds to turn brown and fail to open properly. Many of the Old Garden Roses and some of the newer ones have considerable resistance to black spot.