



April Tips

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Anytime this month is a good time to start adding soil amendments to vegetable gardens or annual beds, sow seeds of many plants, or start cuttings. The soil should be dry enough to be worked without compacting it. The temperature should be perfect for working outside and the soil temperature is usually ideal for seed germination and planting transplants.

Vegetables

It is not too late to transplant some cool-season vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, beets, herbs such as chives, dill, cilantro, mint, oregano, rosemary, thyme, tarragon. Other plants to transplant are [kale](#), peas, parsley, radishes, spinach etc. You can transplant or direct seed most varieties of tomatoes, melons, peppers, eggplant, beans and cucumbers. You may need to cover them at night if it is going to get cold.

Fruit Trees

From now through June is ideal for planting citrus, avocados, and other semi-tropical fruit crops such as kiwis (which is a woody vine), kumquats, and pomegranates. In frost-free areas, also try cherimoya, guava, mango, and passion fruit. For containers, be sure to choose dwarf varieties or dwarfing rootstocks. For the best choice in citrus, look for trees with many strong branches, a smooth graft union, and deep green leaves.

Prune and frost-damaged shoots or woody stems once the plant has completely leafed out and you can easily see just what wood is dead. If you're in doubt, wait another month to avoid pruning wood which was just late in leafing out. By mid-summer, any remaining deadwood will be obvious.

Fertilize newly planted trees and those that are less than three years old to assure establishment, strong growth, and good fruit production. Older trees may not need annual fertilization. Keep composts, manures, and fertilizers away from tree trunks.

Ornamentals

Transplant spring flowering annuals and perennials now, and consider sowing seed or transplanting most summer annual and perennial flowers. Crops include agapanthus, ageratums, alyssum, globe amaranth, amaryllis, asters, baby's breath, bachelor's buttons, balsam, beebalm, fibrous begonia, bougainvilleas, calendulas, campanula (canterbury bells), candytuft, carnations, celosia (cockscomb), chrysanthemums, cineraria, coleus, columbine, coreopsis, coralbells, cosmos, English and gloriosa and marguerite and Shasta daisies, daylily, delphinium, dianthus (sweet William, pinks), dusty miller, felicia, forget-me-nots, four o'clocks, foxglove, fuchsias, gaillardias, gazania, geum, geraniums, godetia, heliotropes, hibiscus, hollyhocks, impatiens, johnny-jump-ups, lantanas, larkspur, lavender, linaria, lobelia, lunaria (honesty, money, or silver dollar plant), marigolds, mimulus, morning glories, nasturtiums, nemesias, nicotianas, pansies, penstemons, periwinkle, petunias, phlox, California and Iceland and Oriental and Shirley poppies, portulaca (moss or sun rose), potentilla, primroses, pyrethrums (painted daisy), salvias, scabiosas (pincushion), schizanthus, snapdragons, statice, stock, strawflowers, sunflowers, sweet peas,



tithonia (Mexican sunflower), torenia, verbena, violas, and zinnias.

Plant summer-blooming bulbs, corms, and tubers, including acidanthera, agapanthus, tuberous begonias, caladiums, calla lilies, canna lilies, dahlias, daylilies, gladiolus, iris, ixia, lilies, montbretias, tigridias, tuberose, and watsonias.

Place a small amount of fertilizer a full inch beneath each bulb and apply fertilizer on the soil surface monthly after shoots begin to grow. Keep soil uniformly moist. These practices will assure vigorous plant and keep the bulb developing.

Continue watering and feeding a balanced fertilizer to spring-flowering bulbs until their foliage starts to yellow. This will strengthen the bulbs for further growth and next year's bloom. Then, let the bulbs thoroughly dry out.

Divide and transplant clumps of ornamental grasses. Prune or mow ground covers to reduce their height and thatch or to clear dead portions and stimulate new growth. Suitable candidates include certain iceplants, ivy, potentilla, vinca, wild strawberry, and lantana. For flowering species, wait to prune or mow them until after they have flowered.

For bushier, compact plants, pinch new growth of begonias, chrysanthemums, marguerite daisy, dianthus, fuchsias, geraniums, Swedish ivy, wandering jews, iceplants, lavender, peperomias, philodendrons, pilea, and sedums. Pinch bloomed-out branches throughout the spring and summer to keep plants looking neat and encourage new growth.

Sow or lay sod for [Zoysiagrass](#) lawns. Reseed areas of thin or worn lawn. Loosen the soil surface in the area to be re-seeded, spread seed, lightly incorporate or cover seed, and keep it moist at all times until germination occurs (usually 1 to 3 weeks). Mow lawns regularly. Don't remove more than one third of the green leaf blades at a time, or the individual grass plants may be injured. This may require mowing two times a week to keep the lawn at the desired height without removing more than one-third of the blades. The weather and the texture of your soil will determine the amount and frequency of irrigation to apply to your garden. Heavy clay soils require less irrigation than sandy loam soils. During periods of long, hot weather, plants need more frequent and longer irrigation than during periods with more moderate temperatures. Irrigation which keeps the soil soggy will increase root rot problems.

Mulch the soil around annuals, perennials trees, and shrubs--especially with organic matter to slow the drying and heating effect of the sun. Irrigation frequency will be reduced, but be sure to water thoroughly at each event so that water penetrates the mulch and rewets the plants' root zones.

Continue pulling weeds before they form seedheads or scatter their seeds, and you'll have fewer weed problems later. Weeding the day after watering will make pulling out the entire root system easier.

Roses

Feed roses heavily as new growth emerges to ready them for their long blooming season. Incorporate fertilizer within the plant's dripline to the depth of three inches. Water deeply. Maintain regular irrigation, usually once or twice a week, until fall. After flowering, prune the spent blooms down to the first five-part leaf or further to gently shape the plant, feed lightly, and water. Repeating this process through the season will encourage continuous bloom throughout the season. To reduce mildew and blackspot diseases, water plants only with drip, bubbler, or another surface irrigation method that does not wet foliage. If the roses need pruning here is a great [rose pruning](#) link.

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