

Monthly Gardening Tasks

(adapted from *Wisconsin Garden Journal*, Madison Area Master Gardeners Association)

January

Houseplants, Perennials, and Annuals

- Give houseplants a monthly shower with tepid water
- Start seeds for ageratum, begonia, and petunias. Sow all seeds in a sterile seed-starting mix to avoid damping-off disease.
- Begin planning your garden. Consider cold hardiness when selecting plants.
- Week 4 – start delphinium seeds now for late summer bloom.

Vegetables and Herbs

- Begin planning your garden. Rotate crop locations each year.
- Before ordering seeds, check last year's seeds for viability by placing a few seeds between moist paper towels for several days. Don't use seeds with poor germination rates.

Lawns, Trees, and Shrubs

- Check trees and shrubs for wildlife damage. Fence with ¼ inch hardware cloth if needed.
- Remove excess snow from ornamentals by placing a broom or rake under the branch and bumping it lightly.
- Do not try to remove ice from ornamentals.

Fruits and Berries

- Check stored apples and discard any spoiled fruit.
- Prune apples and bramble fruit. This can also be done in February or March.

February

Houseplants, Perennials, and Annuals

- Week 1 – Inspect dahlia and begonia tubers and other stored fleshy rooted plants for rot or desiccation.

March

Average last Spring Frost, May 24-30 (most seeds require starting about 6-8 weeks before this date, April 13-March 30)

Houseplants, Perennials, and Annuals

- Week 3 – Begin regular fertilization of houseplants.
- Order perennial plants and schedule delivery for when the ground is workable.
- Week 4- Start seeds of slow-growing annuals. Transfer them in mid-May to a cold frame.
- Week 4 – Start tuberous begonias and caladiums in pots. Start seeds for impatiens, vinca, pansies and geraniums. Start tender bulbs such as calla lilies indoors – move outdoors after all danger of frost is past.

- When snow melts, check perennial beds for roots heaved from frost. Gently step down any exposed roots and cover with mulch.

Vegetables and Herbs

- Start seedlings of cabbage, cauliflower, head lettuce and parsley.

Lawns, Trees, and Shrubs

- Finish pruning of dormant trees.
- Sharpen lawn mower blades and have mower serviced before spring rush.
- Cut out old canes of climbing roses so new shoots can grow.

April

Houseplants, Perennials, and Annuals

- Set out pansy plants when ground is workable.
- Remove rose cones when soil thaws. Gradually remove soil mound from around rose plants. Prune rose canes if not done last fall.
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Vegetables and Herbs

- If ground is not frozen and is fairly dry, rake off last season's mulches on vegetable garden soil so it can dry and be warmed by the sun. Remove any plant residue left from last year.
- Week 3 – Start tomato seeds indoors. Research shows that seven-week-old transplants produce earliest fruit and best overall results. Also start Pepper seeds and broccoli.
- Fertilize and cultivate established asparagus beds.
- Turn compost pile and add fresh kitchen scraps, composted manure, and dried leaves.

Lawns, Trees and Shrubs

- Fertilize shade trees and shrubs with high-nitrogen fertilizer (16-8-8) when buds swell.
- Fertilize evergreens with 16-8-8 at a rate of ½ pound per foot of height or spread, whichever is greater.
- Prune grapes, dormant fruit trees and berry bushes while still dormant.
- Fertilize established fruit trees with low-nitrogen fertilizer when buds begin to swell. Use 1 ounce of actual nitrogen per year of tree age, not to exceed ½ pound per season

May

- Fertilize shade trees & shrubs (when peonies bloom or buds swell) with high-nitrogen fertilizer (16-8-8)
- Fertilize evergreens with 16-8-8 at a rate of 1/3# per foot of height or spread, whichever is greater
- When perennial beds can be worked, spread fertilizer recommended by soil test and gently work into soil
- Feed garlic when green leaves begin to grow and then every 2-3 week until mid-June
- Prune non-flowering shrubs
- Fertilize asparagus – add lime
- Fertilize raspberries – apply ½ # urea (1 cup) per 100 feet or 2 cups high N fertilizer around each plant, repeat in June
- PUT DEER PELLETS ON HYDRANGEA
- Fertilize blueberries when growth starts, add bagged cow manure or ¼ c aluminum sulfate or 10-10-10 two time per year, repeat after flowering
- Prune pines by cutting 2/3's length of candles

June

- Fertilize lawn late May/Early June
- Plant veggies when lilac in full bloom, check soil temperature for planting
- When nighttime temps >50° move houseplants outside
- Cut back tall perennials: dahlia, mums, asters, Joe Pye Weed, sedum

July

- Remove Peony seed pods
- Harvest onions, garlic, early potatoes when tops shrivel
- Plant fall lettuce, Bok Choi, Kale, spinach
- Fertilize asparagus
- Deadhead spirea to encourage new growth, flowers

August

- Order spring flowering bulbs for fall planting
- Keep phlox deadheaded

September

(Average Fall killing frost, September 13-19)

- Cut perennials after first frost
- Fertilize astilbe with 20-10-10 late September
- Fertilize lawn – labor day
- Take cuttings for winter houseplants (coleus, geraniums)
- Bring caladium inside before frost to die back and store
- Divide sea thrift, foam flower and coral bells and pot some for houseplants

October

- Plant spring bulbs when soil is <50°
- Rejuvenate rhubarb by dividing into quarters and replant
- Plant garlic
- Dig up and store tender bulbs
- Fertilize spring bulbs after first hard frost

November

- Reduce watering and feeding houseplants
- Mulch asparagus and garlic beds