

What To Do in April

Plant vegetable seeds. Lima beans, snap beans, beets, chard, okra, black-eyed peas, radishes, New Zealand spinach, summer squash LATE APRIL: Cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumber, eggplant, pumpkin, watermelon

Plant vegetable plants. Eggplant, pepper, summer squash, sweet potato slips, tomatillo, tomato (Tomatoes are best planted the first half of the month).

Plant herb seeds or plants. Anise, basil, bay, catnip, chives, comfrey, costmary, cumin, fennel, fenugreek, scented geranium, germander, horehound, horseradish, lamb's ear, lavender, lemon grass, lemon verbena, Mexican mint marigold, oregano, perilla, rosemary, sage, santolina, summer savory, winter savory, sesame, sorrel, southernwood, tansy, tarragon, thyme, wormwood

Plant annual flower/ornamental seeds. Ageratum, balsam, castor bean, celosia, cleome, coleus, coreopsis, cosmos, cypress vine, four o'clocks, globe amaranth (gomphrena), gourds, hyacinth bean vine, impatiens, marigold, moonflower vine, morning glory vine, periwinkle, sunflower, tithonia (Mexican sunflower), zinnia

Plant annual flower/ornamental plants. Ageratum, ajuga, balsam, begonia, blue daze, caladiums, celosia, coleus, copper plant, gazania, geranium, globe amaranth (gomphrena), impatiens, marigold, penta, periwinkle, Drummond phlox, portulaca, purple fountain grass, purslane, torenia (wishbone flower), zinnia

Plant perennial plants. Black-eyed susan, purple coneflower (echinacea), shasta daisy, ox-eye daisy, four-nerve daisy, lantana, plumbago, salvia, yarrow, and many more

Plant ornamental grasses. There are many better choices than just pampas grass. Ornamental grasses produce their feathery or unique blooms in the fall, so plant them now! Mexican wire- (or feather-) grass, big muhly, Lindheimer muhly, inland sea oats and sideoats grama (the state grass of Texas) are only a few of the choices!

Plant warm-season bulbs. Caladium, elephant ears, lily

Plant trees and shrubs. While fall, winter and early spring are the best times to plant trees and shrubs, they can be planted with care this month. Plant with a little bone meal or rock phosphate in the hole. Do not amend the backfill with more than 20% compost, if any. (In other words, plant the tree or shrub with the same soil you dug out of the hole - your native soil). Water deeply once a week, following with a watering of seaweed solution.

Plant turfgrasses and grass seed. Consider a native tall grass mixture for a full sun corner of your yard.

Plant summer cover crops in fallow areas. Consider planting buckwheat or cowpeas (black-eyed peas) to improve the soil. Pull or treat weeds before they go to seed. Pulling weeds is still one of the best methods for getting rid of them. Several layers of newspaper, overlapped well at the edges and slightly wetted down, and covered with at least three inches of compost, is a most excellent weed barrier. Bare soil invites weeds. Also, poor, disturbed soil is prime habitat for weeds. Therefore, soil which is rich in manure compost and a full host of nutrients from organic sources can actually deter most weeds, even if the weed seeds fall upon the soil! This phenomenon is explained in the book, Weeds, Control Without Poisons by Charles Walters.

Fertilize established trees, shrubs, lawn, and plants. Use an organic fertilizer like the Lady Bug brand 8-2-4, or Rabbit Hill Farm or Bioform brand products. Continue spraying the landscape with seaweed solution, as often as once a week, in the morning or evening. Use seaweed solution to water in new transplants to help relieve transplant shock and to stimulate rooting. Add

fish emulsion once or twice a month for an added nutritional boost. Apply Medina Soil Activator or Lady Bug Terra Tonic to the soil. These products stimulate microbial activity, which in turn fertilizes the plants. They also improve soil texture and permeability. Topdress the lawn with half an inch or less of compost, if you haven't done so yet.

Add compost, then mulch, to bare soil areas. An inch or two of compost and two to three inches of mulch is needed, wherever possible, to get the benefits of weed suppression and moisture retention. The other benefits we receive from this combination are a cooler soil, more life in the soil, therefore a more fertile and loose soil, disease and pest suppression, and more beautiful gardens.

Monitor plants for insects. Aphids, thrips, whiteflies, stink bugs and the like are best controlled early on with the least toxic solution. Consult an organic guide for insect or disease control, such as Malcolm Beck and Howard Garrett's Texas Bug Book, or anything published by Rodale. Correct identification of the problem is the first step. If you're not at least 95% sure of the problem, bring a sample of your affected plant - sealed in a plastic bag or jar - to a reliable nursery for identification.