April Gardening Tips
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Annuals and Perennials
- Cut ornamental grasses and sedum to a height of 6” before new growth appears.
- Cut buddleia, Russian sage, and artemisia to a height of 8-12”. Prune lavender to 1/3 of its height once new growth appears.
- Prune old, leggy growth from heather (which flowers on new growth in late summer) but prune heath (which sets its flower buds in late spring) just enough to shape it in the early spring.
- Pull back mulch from perennials to allow the soil to warm up but be prepared to temporarily recover them if heavy frosts are predicted.
- Start dahlia tubers in pots indoors in a cool spot. Pinch back tips when they reach 6” and transplant outdoors when the ground temperature reaches 60°.
- Get the jump on weeds in garden beds by pulling out any that overwinter and applying mulch.
- For an instant spring show, fill containers with purchased forced spring bulbs from supermarkets and garden centers.
- Freezing temperatures don’t harm pansies, but if they have been grown in a greenhouse they should be gradually exposed to outdoor temperatures before planting.
- Keep Easter lilies in a moist and brightly lit location. They can be planted in the garden after the danger of frost.
- Divide overcrowded summer or fall blooming perennials.
- Hardy water lilies may be planted in pools in spring but wait until the water reaches 70° for tropical water lilies.
- Place peony supports.

Education and Events
- Sign up for gardening classes or seminars offered by many garden centers or town recreation office or through the UConn Master Gardener Program.

Houseplants
- Transplant houseplants that need repotting.
- Inspect houseplants for pests and use controls as needed.
- Cut back plants that have grown leggy.

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In the Vegetable Garden

- Continue to direct sow peas, carrots, radishes, lettuces, and spinach every two weeks through mid-May for staggered harvests.
- Plant seedlings of cauliflower, cabbage, and broccoli.
- Purchase onion sets for planting and set 1” deep and 4 to 5” apart when soil can be worked.
- To speed up the warming of soil on garden beds, cover the beds with black plastic for a few weeks.
- Place seedlings in cold frames around April 25 or later to harden off.

Insects

- Apply sprays as needed to control insect pests and diseases on apple, peaches and nectarines, pear, and plum trees if the temperature is over 40°F.
- Check fruit trees for Eastern tent caterpillars, they emerge around the same time as leaves sprout. Blast nests with a strong spray of water to destroy them.
- A new generation of gypsy moth caterpillars will hatch in late April and begin feeding on the leaves of many tree species. Remove and destroy any egg masses you find on your trees.

Landscape and Lawns

Fruits

- Check fruit trees for Eastern tent caterpillars, they emerge around the same time as leaves sprout. Blast nests with a strong spray of water to destroy them.
- Spread fertilizer under apple trees and small fruits except strawberries which are fertilized in late August.
- Continue to apply horticultural oil sprays to control insect pests on fruit trees if temperature is over 40°F.
- Don’t wait too long to remove mulches from strawberries. Once the leaves have emerged from under the straw and yellowing is evident, pull the mulch away from the tops of the plants and tramp it down between the rows. Keeping the base of the plants mulched helps keep the berries clean, controls weeds, and conserves moisture.

Lawns

- Dead spots in the lawn can still be renovated in early April. Top dress bare areas with a mix of topsoil and compost, reseed, and keep moist until germination.
- Apply pre-emergent crabgrass weed control when the Forsythia bloom.
- Do not use a pre-emergent weed control if you are trying to germinate grass seed.
- Early spring is a great time to spot spray or hand-dig dandelions. If spraying, choose a product that won’t kill grass. If digging, wait until after a rain, when soil is soft.
- Prune back bedraggled looking ground covers and fertilize lightly after April 15.

Trees and Shrubs

- A new generation of gypsy moth and eastern tent caterpillars will hatch in late April and begin feeding on the leaves of many tree species. Remove and destroy any egg masses you find on your trees.
- Gypsy moth egg masses are buff-colored and may be found on trees, stones, fences, lawn furniture, and other protected places.
- The eggs of the eastern tent caterpillar are deposited in brownish masses, resembling a large raisin squeezed around a twig. Scrape off the egg masses and crush underfoot or drop into a pail of detergent and water.
- Complete removal of diseased, weak, or crossing branches on shrubs and small trees.
- Celebrate Arbor Day on April 25th by planting a tree. Choose planting sites based on exposure to sun, shade, wind and distance from water source.
- Remove any remaining leaves from last summer on roses and spread a thin layer of new mulch underneath them. This will help prevent the spread of any diseases that may have over-wintered.
- Spread fertilizer under roses and apple trees.

Wildlife

- Check for raised mole tunnels in the yard and plan to put down a grub control product between mid-June and mid-July.
- Set up a bat house early in the month to encourage them to roost. Visit the DEEP’s Bats fact sheet for information and bat house plans.
Yard Tools and Accessories

- Set up 1 or 2 rain barrels at downspouts to water garden beds, flower beds, and containers.
- When filling large containers for the deck or patio, save on soil by creating a false bottom. Most container plants don’t need more than about a foot of soil depth for their roots. Keep the plant in a smaller pot that is supported by an inverted pot or rocks. Do not use rocks, Styrofoam packing peanuts, or soda cans directly below the layer of soil as water will not drain properly and the plant’s roots may rot.

Despite good cultural practices, pests and diseases at times may appear. Chemical control should be used only after all other methods have failed.

For pesticide information please call UConn Home and Garden Education Center weekdays, in Connecticut call toll free 877-486-6271. Out of state call 860-486-6271

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