

Gardening Tips for April

Well, spring has sprung, and it's time to play in the dirt to create a beautiful yard for the summer of 2011. Hopefully by now you have removed all the old debris left from winter. Let's get started!

There is still time to plant trees and shrubs. However, by mid-month it will be a little late to transplant large trees or shrubs, so do them now. March, April and May are ideal for pruning evergreens. If you have a Juniper, Cypress or conifer that needs shearing or pruning this is a good time to accomplish this task. Remove all dead, diseased, and undesirable wood. Do not prune back into the bare wood part of the plant. Prune Forsythia after it finishes flowering. Broadleaf and needle leaf evergreens need a bit of high nitrogen fertilizer around their bases.

Now is the time for planting summer flowering bulbs like dahlias, gladiolas and lilies. Mix bulb fertilizers and peat moss into the soil. Tuberous Begonias, and Canna should not be set outdoors until all danger of frost has passed, so wait until next month. Plant annual seeds of asters, cosmos, marigolds, zinnias in the garden now. You should deadhead spring flowering bulbs after blooming. Trim them back, feed, and water them well. Divide Daylilies, Delphiniums, iris, chrysanthemums, Daisies, and Phlox. The additional plants you create can be traded, given to friends or planted in another spot. Lastly, Hybrid Tea Roses should be fertilized prior to buds beginning to bloom by using a systemic fertilizer it will help prevent insect infestation later in the summer.

Spring is also a good time to thatch and over seed the lawn. Build-up can smother your lawn and provide the cause for diseases. Remove thatch by a brisk raking, or with a de-thatching machine. Over seeding will help fill-in the lawn and deter the re-growth of moss and weeds. Apply a light compost or soil over the seed to keep it moist and in place. Use a garden fork to punch holes and aerate the lawn. Make sure your blade on the mower is sharp to prevent tearing the grass tips. To avoid scalping set the blade to cut the grass at 2 ½ inches. Don't forget to apply a spring type lawn fertilizer with a moss-killer included to perk up your lawn's appearance and color.

Don't forget your houseplants. Rotate them so that each side gets sunlight for even growth. Spring-cleaning will keep them beautiful and help avoid diseases. Remove spent flowers, dead leaves or branches, or yellow leaves. Rinse the dust from the leaves with a sprayer so they can BREATHE!

Remember to plant a tree for Arbor Day. Keep all transplants well watered during dry spells. Check container plants and those under the eaves of the house and under tall evergreens to see that they are getting enough water. And most of all enjoy your time playing in the dirt!

Ann