April Gardening To-Do

- Finish up raking out any beds with leaves, winter mulch, etc.
- Cut back any perennials that you didn't last fall.
- Divide perennials that bloom in the late spring, summer, or fall now, as needed or desired.
- Prune trees, shrubs, and evergreens now just as they are starting to leaf out. Don't prune ornamental flowering trees or shrubs now, though, or you'll trim off the developing flowers. Instead, prune them immediately after bloom.
- Spray fruit trees and roses with dormant oil before temperatures hit the high 80s to prevent certain pests and diseases.
- If you choose to use a preemergent weed killer, such as Preen, in your beds and borders, now it the time to apply it. Organic versions are also available. Look for products that also fertilize.
- Plant nearly any type of tree or shrub now.
- Plant the seeds of radishes as soon as you can easily work the ground. (I like to interplant with carrot seeds.) Plant other cool-weather loving seeds, such as lettuces, spinach, peas, turnips, beets, and various greens later in April.
- Plant cool-season annual flowers, such as pansies, now. Later in April, plant snapdragons, godietas, Iceland poppies, violas, primulas, and English daisies, if you can find them in various garden centers.
- Plant seedlings of cool-season vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and cabbages now.
- Plant bareroot roses now. (It's probably best to wait until the second half of April to plant those sold already actively growing in pots and leafing out.)
- Plant perennial edibles that like cool weather, such as rhurbarb, strawberries, raspberries, and asparagus.
- Plant seedlings of cool-season vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbages, and onion sets now.
- Good Friday is the traditional day for planting potatoes in Iowa.

Notes

- Plant herbs now that like cool weather, including parsley, chives, and cilantro. Also plant any perennial herbs, such as tarragon, oregano, thyme, and rosemary.
- Wait to plant warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, tomatoes, and petunias, until after the last average frost date in mid-May.
- If you choose to use lawn chemicals, apply a fertilizer and a preemergent herbicide when the bright yellow forsythia blooms. Or use a combination product. Organic gardeners should apply a corn meal gluten herbicide now.
- Wait to mulch until the ground warms up more, usually in late May or so.

Notes