

YEAR ROUND GARDENING

April Gardening Calendar

Eileen Tully, Colorado Master Gardener

April is a busy gardening month and the beginning of the planting season. Every year brings new gardening challenges. This year it's been windy and dry with unusually warm weather. Don't be surprised if your plants appear confused and are coming out of dormancy early. Be watchful. We could still get freezing weather and heavy snow. If it remains dry be aware of high fire danger.

If you lost a lot of mulch to winter winds lay out a new layer 1 ½ inches deep.

When soil has thawed--

Divide and transplant summer and fall blooming perennials such as sedum Autumn Joy, Phlox paniculata, Shasta daisy, perennial Salvias and Ajuga, Bugle Weed. Label your plants as you plant and subdivide.

Plant trees, shrubs and vines. If you purchase bare root plants, soak them in water for several hours before planting.

Vegetables –

Outdoors, plant Asparagus crowns (roots) in trenches 6" deep; gradually fill in with soil as the young plants grow.

Plant early: potatoes, lettuce, radish, onions, peas, rhubarb, spinach cauliflower and carrots.

Indoors, start tomato seeds.

Choose good 'performers' like Big Beef, Celebrity, and Early Girl.

Flowers --

Early planting of pansies will give your garden instant color.

Outdoors, sow seeds of perennials and wild flowers.

As spring weather settles in plant snapdragons, sweet peas, lobelia and sweet alyssum.

These cool season annuals can tolerate a light frost.



Photo by Freddie Bogardus

Roses: usually around mid-April new growth starts. This is the time to slowly remove mulch from around the plants. Prune damaged or dead canes first then prune all others to approximately 12" to 24" above ground. When roses are actively growing, fertilize with a rose food formulation of 9-14-9 which is higher in phosphorus to encourage blooms and strong roots. For climbing roses prune only dead or damaged canes.

Lawns –

To grow a beautiful lawn, begin with aeration. If weather is warm and dry water one inch a week.

This is prime time to examine your irrigation system. Check for leaks or problems with sprinkler heads. Examine the lines and emitters to be sure everything is working in drip irrigation. If you're a hose-dragger like me, check for bends or punctures in your hose. If you're planning to try soaker hoses in your garden choose a sunny day to lay out the curled-up hose. It's much easier to set in place once the hose has relaxed. Also, put some sort of markers along the soaker hose so you won't slice into it when planting. I use colorful golf tees.

Weeds—

These persistent survivors seemed to come up earlier than usual this year. Hand pull the young ones before they get too big...or too many.

Late freeze damage to trees and shrubs—

If we get a sudden freeze and new, emerging leaves wilt and look brown wait at least a week to see if new growth emerges. Frozen plant tissue is soft and wet and vulnerable to infection if it's 'open.' If a branch fails to revive it may be necessary to prune again.

If you have lawn and garden questions, go to ask.extension.org for answers. To learn what events are coming up at the CSU Extension office in El Paso County, visit <http://elpasoco.colostate.edu/index.shtml>