

Note that the information in our monthly tips is intended for gardening in the Bountiful, UT area and may not be accurate for different climates.

April Gardening

Ave High **60° F.**
Ave Low **38° F.**
Ave Moisture **1.4"**

Each year is different, let the weather be your guide. Use this gardening guide as a simple reminder as to what needs to be done in your garden this month.

April can be a strange month. Some years, April lives up to its promise and spring arrives in all her glory. Other years, winter just won't give up, and a tug-of-war between the seasons continues. Old Man Winter often sends his blessings in the form of a late season snowstorm. This can ruin the blossoms of the early tulips and daffodils and can dash the spirits of gardeners. Fortunately, the snow is short lived, and the plants and gardeners may recover quickly.



'Spring is Finally Here!' What a beautiful time of the year with the tulips, daffodils, magnolias, quince, forsythia, and all the other spring flowering plants showing their beauty. As you look out upon your garden, you ask yourself a question "Where do I even begin?"

There is so much to do in every corner of the yard this month that it is difficult to know where to start. There are quite a few things one can do to help keep the garden looking its best the rest of this season. It is up to you to decide which project is most important and which projects need to be delayed.

Trees & Shrubs

√ Spray all trees and shrubs with Dormant Oil before they start to bloom or produce new leaves. Dormant Oil is organic and safe to use on Roses, Fruit Trees, Raspberries, Junipers, Pine Trees, and most other plants in the yard. It safely controls scale, spidermites, aphids, and most other insects that spent the winter hibernating on your plants.



√ It is time to plant trees and shrubs. However, by mid month it will be a little late to transplant large trees or shrubs, so move them now.

√ The months of March, April and May are ideal for pruning evergreens. So, if you have a Juniper, Arborvitae, or another conifer that needs shearing or pruning, this is a good time to accomplish that task. Remove all dead, diseased, and undesirable wood. However, do not prune them back into the bare wood part of the plant. Always leave green tips on all the branches.

√ Do not shear the tips of spruce or pine trees; be sure to prune branches at a crotch. You can shear the new growth later in May, but learn the correct techniques and timing before you try.

√ Wait to prune your Forsythia, Flowering Almond, Quince, lilac, and all the spring blooming shrubs, until after

they finish flowering. Be sure to prune them to keep them under control.

√ Broadleaf and needle leaf evergreens benefit most from lightly spreading fertilizer around their bases before they start to grow.

√ Prune fruit trees if not already done. If your tree does not need major renovation, wait until after the tree is finished blooming to prune it. Late pruning helps keep the tree smaller. Early pruning stimulates more new growth. Plant a new fruit tree.

√ Remove tree guards or burlap winter protection from any young trees or shrubs. Try not to leave tree guards in place throughout the summer. They don't allow enough air movement around the base of the trunk and they can promote insect damage or rotting of the bark.

√ Apply **Systemic Tree and Shrub Insecticide** (Merit) to the roots of trees and shrubs prone to insect and borer problems. Aspen, Ash, Willow, Lilac, and Locust are a few trees and shrubs with major borer problems.

Systemic tree and Shrub Insecticide eliminates the need to spray tall Maple, Linden and shade trees to control aphids, if it is applied early enough in the spring.

Flowers

√ Get a jump on spring. Plant flower seeds inside 6 to 8 weeks before you want to transplant them outside.



√ April is the month for planting summer flowering bulbs like dahlias, cannas, gladiolas and lilies. Mix bulb fertilizer and Bumper Crop, manure, or homemade compost into the planting soil.

√ Start tuberous Begonias inside early but they should not be set outdoors until all danger of frost has passed, so wait until next month.

√ Plant annual seeds of asters, alyssum, cosmos, marigolds, zinnias outside in the garden the end of April.

√ When all frost danger has passed you can move your geraniums outdoors. Trim them back, feed them and re-pot them if necessary. Water them consistently once you put them outside.

√ When tulips and daffodils have finished blooming, you should deadhead them. Do not cut off the green foliage yet! These green leaves should continue to grow for a few weeks, to provide the bulb



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with food for flowering next year. Fertilize all your spring flowering bulbs lightly this month.

✓ Divide perennials such as Daylilies, Delphiniums, Iris, Chrysanthemums, Daisies, Hosta, and Phlox. The additional plants you create can be given to friends, or planted into a new area of the garden.

✓ Pinch off the tips of Chrysanthemums, when they are 4 inches tall to keep them shorter and bushier

✓ Be Careful! Listen to the weatherman. If you plant a day or two too early, you may have to replant the same plants again a day or two later.

Roses

✓ Prune roses as soon as the danger of hard frost is past; either late-March or early-April. Prune them severely and then continue to prune them lightly all summer. Prune miniature roses 6"-9" tall, floribunda roses 12" tall, hybrid tea roses 14" tall, and grandiflora roses 18" tall.

✓ Climbing roses should be thinned to get rid of the old tangled growth. Shrub roses and English Garden roses should be pruned to control their size and shape. Ground-cover roses do not need much pruning, just keep them the size you need them.

✓ Fertilize roses as soon as you finish pruning them. Using a fertilizer with a systemic insecticide will help prevent insect infestation later in the summer, as it feeds your rose. Fertilize roses every 6 to 8 weeks until mid-August. Apply magnesium (Epsom's Salts) around roses and other flowers in April. You will be amazed at the difference it makes.

✓ Plant new rosebushes. Try some of the new **AARS varieties**. These roses are new varieties that have been tested throughout the country. **All-America Rose Selections** is a nonprofit association dedicated to the introduction and promotion of exceptional roses. The AARS runs the world's most challenging horticultural testing program, and consistently recognizes roses that will be easy to grow, and require minimal care.

✓ For more information about the new varieties of roses go to <http://www.rose.org/>

Vegetables & Fruit

✓ Plant perennial vegetables like asparagus, rhubarb, horseradish, etc.

✓ It's definitely time to plant peas, carrots, beets, spinach, radishes, parsnips and onions. Transplant broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage out in the garden. Don't wait until May to plant these early vegetables.



✓ Dust seeds with Bonide Garden Dust when planting them in cold, or wet soil, to help prevent them from rotting.

✓ Potatoes can be planted anytime now. Cut potatoes into pieces, dust them with Bonide Garden Dust, and let them sit for at least 24 hours before planting. Potatoes can rot easily when planted in cold and wet soil.



✓ Plant radishes with your carrots, onions, or beets. As you harvest radishes you are thinning your carrots, onions or beets.

✓ Thin radishes, beets and carrots as needed when they start to grow. Plants growing too close together do not produce as well as well spaced plants.

✓ Wait until May to plant tomatoes, beans, corn, squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and peppers.

✓ You can plant tomato plants outside this month if you plant them inside a Wall of Water, otherwise wait until Mother's Day to plant tomatoes. Remember to set up your Wall or Water at least 3 or 4 days before you plant.

✓ Cut out all the dead canes from your raspberry patch. The new canes that will bear this year's fruit should have new, swollen buds along the edges. Thin these to five canes per foot of row to allow good air circulation and prevent overcrowding. Spray with dormant oil before the temperature gets too warm. Spray again in May, with Spinosad or Malathion, to control the cane girdler.

✓ April is a great time to select and plant fruit trees, grape vines, and berry plants. Fruits and berries will grow in the shade, but they do best when planted in full sun.

✓ Plant two different varieties of blueberries to get proper cross pollination. Blueberries need an acid soil for best results. Try planting blueberries in large containers in order to control the soil ph. Read our handout about **Blueberry Care** for more information about blueberries in Utah.

Lawn

✓ Just because the irrigation water is turned on April 15, it doesn't mean the lawn needs water right then.



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Wait until the lawn starts to show dryness before watering. Drought stress early in the year, while the weather is cool, promotes deeper root growth. Do not ever water lawns every day, even during the middle of summer.



✓ Water early in the morning before the heat of the day, or early in the evening. Your lawn should receive 1" of water per week, 1/2" each time you water. Set out tuna cans in several areas of the lawn. Turn on the sprinklers. When you have 1/2" of water in most cans, turn off the sprinklers. Did you get the same amount of water in each can? If not, a sprinkler system inspection may be necessary.

✓ The application of a spring lawn fertilizer should perk up the lawn and improve its over-all color and appearance. Choose from **Spring & Summer Lawn Fertilizer**, **Dr Earth Organic Lawn Food**, or **IFA Crabgrass Preventer**. Wait to apply crabgrass preventer until the forsythia blossoms start to fade. Reapply crabgrass preventer in 60 to 90 days to prevent spurge and other late germinating weeds.

✓ **Sulfur Coated Urea**, a slow releasing fertilizer, is an excellent choice for a long-lasting lawn fertilizer. You only need to apply this fertilizer once a year.

✓ Spring is a good time to thatch and over-seed the lawn. Thatch buildup can smother your lawn and promote some lawn diseases. Remove thatch with a brisk raking, or with a power rake. Over seeding will help fill-in the lawn and deter the re-growth of weeds. Use about one pound of grass seed for every 300 to 800 square feet of lawn area. Apply a light compost, or peatmoss, over the seed to keep it moist and in place.

✓ Humate, also know as humic acid, organically helps to break down thatch. You can apply it once or twice each year with excellent results. Humate also helps the lawn resist some lawn diseases, and it helps promotes a deeper root system, which in turn makes it more resistant to drought.

✓ Aerating the lawn will allow water to penetrate deeper into the lawn soil and reduce the need to water during the dryer months of July and August. Use a hand aerator or a garden fork to punch holes over the surface of your lawn. You can rent a power aerator that will make the job even easier.

✓ As mowing becomes necessary, be certain that the blade is sharp to prevent tearing the grass tips. (Did you get the mower tuned up and sharpened back in January?)

Set the blade on your lawnmower to cut the grass at 2 1/2 inches to avoid scalping. A mulching blade will eliminate the need to rake or bag the clippings, prevent thatch buildup, and the clippings will provide food for the lawn.



✓ Apply crabgrass control by mid month. Repeat in 6 to 8 weeks to control spurge. Some of the best pre emergents for your lawn are: Barricade, Halts, or Galleria.

✓ Spot treat broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, henbit, and chickweed, they may be blooming now.

Houseplants

✓ Rotate your houseplants so that each side receives it's share of light, for even growth and a balanced shape. As the sun's rays strengthen, some plants may need to be moved away from a south-facing window to avoid leaf scorch.

✓ Spring cleaning your plants will keep them beautiful and help to avoid diseases. Remove any spent flowers, dead leaves or branches, or any yellowing leaves. Rinse the dust from the leaves with the kitchen sprayer. Clean leaves allow the plant to breathe!

✓ Pinching back the tips of foliage plants will stimulate new growth and make your plant more full and bushier. You can start cuttings for transplanting into new pots. Use a sharp clean knife to cut the stem just below a leaf node. Remove the lowest leaves, dip the cut end into a rooting hormone and insert it into some fresh, sterile potting soil. These cuttings will be ready in just a few weeks.

✓ Do not move houseplants outside until night temperatures remain above 60 degrees.

✓ Fertilize amaryllis every month and keep them in bright light to encourage new leaves. Plant them outside when the weather permits.

Miscellaneous

✓ Apply pre emergents in the gardens to help prevent many garden weeds. Preen, Treflan, and Casoron are chemical preemergents that can be used in home gardens. Corn Gluten is an organic weed preventer that is safe to use around most plants. Read the labels before applying them.

✓ **Arbor Day is in April, Plant a tree!**



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✓ Although we think of this as a rainy month, it can fool us. Be sure to take a little time to check the plants in containers; especially those under the eaves of the house, and plants under tall evergreens to see that they are getting enough water.



✓ If you have a pond or pool you can add aquatic plants any time after the middle of the month. Start feeding your fish when the water temperature rises above 50 degrees F.

✓ Turn the compost pile after its long winter rest. If it smells bad, add dry straw or sawdust to help eliminate the odor. If the compost is dry, add grass clippings to help speed up the composting process.

✓ Protect bees and other pollinating insects. Do not spray insecticides on trees or shrubs that are blooming.

✓ Ladybugs, preying mantids and beneficial nematodes are available in April, once the temperatures are warm enough. Ladybugs are natural predators of aphids, whiteflies, and other sucking insect pests. Nematodes are useful for certain soil-borne pests such as crane fly larvae and root weevils.

✓ Hang aluminum pie pans or bird 'scare-tape' in Cherry trees to scare the wildbirds away!

Wildbirds

✓ **Q. Why do birds come to my feeder, take a seed or two and fly away?**

✓ A. Some birds, like jays and nuthatches, take a seed or two and then fly to a perch to crack open the hull. They will then hide these seeds in trees and other places for later use.



✓ **Q. When should I feed birds?**

✓ A. It is best to provide food sources all year long. February through August, birds are nesting and need extra food for breeding and rearing baby birds. September through March are difficult times for birds, as many natural sources of food disappear in the winter months.



✓ **Q. What about water?**

✓ A. Clean, fresh water should be made available at all times. During the summer, drinking and bathing are important for birds. In the winter months, in many areas, natural water sources freeze.

✓ **Q. Should I provide a constant food source?**

✓ A. Keep feeders full at all times. Without a constant food source, birds will leave.

✓ **Q. How much do birds eat?**

✓ A. Birds have a high metabolic rate and an average body temperature of 100 degrees (F). They need to eat constantly to store up energy for the winter months and to burn off excess heat during the summer months. Birds will eat their own body weight daily.

✓ **Q. What about feeding birds table scraps and leftovers?**

A. *Not recommended.* Putting out leftovers may seem like a way to avoid waste, but it's not usually a good idea for feeding birds in your backyard. It's possible for the food to spoil and be unhealthy for songbirds; and it's quite likely to attract European Starlings, House Sparrows, or even more undesirable animals such as rats, mice, and raccoons.



✓ **Q. What about moths and other insects in my bird seed?**

✓ A. Seed is a natural product. Often, various types of insects and meal moths are present in seeds. These are harmless natural creatures, and many birds thrive on these insects. To avoid this problem, buy seed in smaller quantities or packages so that it is used quicker. Also, make sure your supplier is keeping seed fresh and that you do not see insects or moths in the store. You can also freeze your wild bird food to eliminate the problem.

✓ Hummingbirds are starting to return from their winter home in Central America. Find your hummingbird feeder and clean it. You will be needing it soon.

✓ **Remember that whatever you accomplish in the garden now will definitely cut down on yard maintenance later this season!**

