



Department of Horticulture

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service • West Lafayette, IN

Spring Garden Calendar

B. Rosie Lerner and Michael N. Dana

Timing horticultural events and practices can vary from year to year, depending on weather conditions. The following information is intended as a general guide. Regional differences are noted when practical. Adjust activities according to local weather and site conditions, and be sure to read label directions thoroughly on all products.

Indoor Plants & Activities

March

- Apply fertilizer to houseplants according to label directions as days grow brighter and longer and new growth begins. Foliage plants require a relatively high-nitrogen fertilizer, while blooming plants thrive on formulations that are higher in phosphorus.
- Remove spent leaves and flowers regularly to improve appearance and encourage more blooms.
- Start seeds of cool season plants for transplanting outdoors later in spring (early March for Northern Indiana, late February for Southern Indiana).

April

- Pot-up roots of tuberous begonias and caladiums in April for transplanting to the garden later.
- Prune, repot, and clean houseplants as needed.
- Start seeds of warm-season crops for transplanting later to the garden (early April for Northern Indiana, late March for Southern Indiana).
- Keep Easter lilies in a bright, cool location out of direct sunlight. Water as soil begins to dry. The yellow pollen-bearing anthers inside the flower can be removed to prevent staining of the petals.

May

- Many indoor plants can be moved to a shady location outdoors after danger of frost is past (May). Plants will dry out more when kept outdoors, so check soil moisture often. Sinking the pots in the ground will help slow down moisture loss, but regular watering will still be necessary.
- Use cuttings of houseplants to increase your collection or share with your friends. Root the cuttings in media such as vermiculite, perlite, or potting soil rather than water. Roots grown in water tend to be weak from lack of oxygen and do not adjust well to being planted in soil.

Woody Landscape Plants & Fruit Trees

March

- Prune trees and shrubs while plants are still dormant. Those that bloom early in spring should be pruned after flowers fade.
- Fertilize woody plants before new growth begins, but wait until after soil temperatures have reached 40°F (usually in early March in Southern Indiana, and late March to early April in Northern Indiana). Two pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet should be broadcast over the entire root area.
- Remove winter coverings from roses as soon as new growth begins, but keep mulch nearby for protection from late freezes. Prune and fertilize as needed.
- Apply superior oil spray to control scale insects and mites on landscape plants and fruit trees when tips of leaves start to protrude from buds.
- Remove tree wrap from trunks to prevent scalding due to overheating of bark.

April

- Plant a tree in celebration of Arbor Day, the last Friday in April in Indiana.
- Bare-root stock should be planted before new top growth begins. Balled-and-burlaped and container stock can still be planted later in spring.
- Remove and destroy overwintering bagworms from landscape trees and shrubs.
- Follow home orchard spray schedule to control insects and diseases. While trees are in bloom, use a pesticide containing fungicide only and no insecticide and thereby avoid injury to bees. Read and follow all label directions.

May

- Thin fruits of apple (and other fruit trees if needed) about 3 weeks after petal fall. Apples should be spaced on the average of about 8 inches apart; peaches at 6 inches apart. If a large crop is set and no thinning is practiced, all fruit will be small and branches may break.
- Apply fungicide sprays to roses to control diseases such as black spot.
- Prune early spring flowering trees and shrubs after flowers fade.

Lawn

March

- Rake to remove leaves, twigs, and trash.
- Mow lawn as needed. The first mowing should be slightly lower than normal to encourage green-up.

April

- Seed bare spots.
- Apply pre-emergence herbicides to control crabgrass (April 1-20 Southern Indiana, April 21-May 10 Northern Indiana). The herbicide siduron is the only crabgrass preventer that can be used on newly seeded lawns.

May

- If needed, apply billbug control to prevent egg laying or damage from larvae feeding.
- Apply post-emergence herbicides to control broadleaves if they are a problem. Be careful to avoid spraying or drifting herbicide onto garden plants.
- Fertilize in May using a 4-1-2 ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium at the rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet.
- If needed, apply insecticides to control sod webworm.
- Begin now to search for sod webworm or other turf-feeding caterpillars. Apply chemical controls only if a large number of caterpillars are present.

Flowers, Vegetables, & Small Fruit

March

- Prepare garden soil for planting. Do NOT work the soil while it is wet. Soil should crumble when squeezed in your hand when it is ready to work. If soil forms a solid ball when squeezed in your hand, it's still too wet.
- Follow last fall's soil test recommendations for fertilizer and pH adjustment. (It's not too late to soil test if you missed last year.)
- Start seeds of warm season vegetables and flowers indoors. (In North and Central Indiana, wait until end of March, early April.)
- Watch for blooms of early spring bulbs such as daffodils, squill, crocus, dwarf iris, and snowdrops.
- Remove old asparagus and rhubarb tops, and then side dress with nitrogen or manure.

April

- Plant cool-season vegetables and flowers as soon as the ground has dried enough to work.
- Harden off transplants before planting outdoors by gradually exposing the young plants to outdoor conditions of wind, brighter sunlight, and lower moisture.
- Plant or transplant asparagus, rhubarb, and small fruit plants such as strawberries and brambles. Divide rhubarb and replant, if last year's planting produced seedstalks.

- Plant sections of certified, disease-free potato "seed" tubers.
- Remove winter mulch from strawberry beds as soon as new growth begins, but keep the mulch nearby to protect against frost and freezes and to help keep weeds under control.
- Remove weak, diseased, or damaged canes from raspberry plants before new growth begins. Remove old fruiting canes (if not removed last year), and shorten remaining canes if necessary.
- Prune grape vines to remove dead or weakened limbs, and repair support trellises as needed.
- Celebrate National Gardening Week in April. Dates vary each year; check with your local county office of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service for exact dates.

May

- Allow foliage of spring flowering bulbs to remain in place after blooms fade. Leaves manufacture the food reserves, which are then stored in the bulb for a repeat showing next year.
- Plant frost-tender plants after danger of frost is past for your area (mid May in Northern Indiana, late April-early May in Southern Indiana).
- Pinch chrysanthemums and annual flower plants to keep them compact and well-branched.
- Make successive plantings of beans and sweet corn to extend the season of harvest.
- Thin seedlings of earlier planted crops such as carrots, lettuce, spinach, and beets to their proper spacing.
- Harvest early plantings of radishes, spinach, and lettuce.
- Harvest asparagus by cutting or snapping spears at, or just below, the soil level.
- Harvest rhubarb by cutting or by grasping the stalk and pulling up and slightly to one side.
- To prevent bacterial wilt in cucumbers, control cucumber beetles, the carriers of the disease, as soon as plants germinate or are transplanted.
- Remove blossoms from newly set strawberry plants to allow better runner formation.
- Remove unwanted sucker growth in raspberries when new shoots are about a foot tall.

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For more information on the subject discussed in this publication, consult your local office of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.
