

## 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

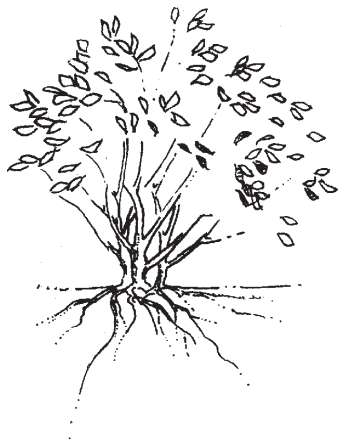
- Allow foliage of spring flowering bulbs to remain in place after blooms fade. Leaves manufacture the food reserves, which are then stored in the bulb for a repeat showing next year.
- Plant frost-tender plants after danger of frost is past for your area (mid May in Northern Indiana, late April-early 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.

*The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Tim Gibb and Clark Throssell in the preparation of this manuscript.*

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# Summer Garden Calendar

*B. Rosie Lerner*

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 and Activities

### June

- Indoor plants require more frequent watering and fertilizing as they increase their summer growth.
- Houseplants can be moved outdoors to a shady location, but pay close attention to their watering needs.
- Cut garden flowers for indoor beauty. Recut the stems again just before placing in water. Add a floral preservative and change the solution frequently.
- Root cuttings of houseplants and garden plants to increase your collection or share with a friend. Take cuttings from vigorously growing plants. Place cut end in rooting media, such as perlite, vermiculite, or peat moss soil mix. Enclose in perforated plastic, and keep out of direct sunlight.

### July

- Keep an eye on houseplants that have been set outdoors. They need more water than they needed indoors. They will dry out rapidly in hot, summer breezes.
- Condition flowers cut from the garden for arranging by removing lower leaves, placing cut stem ends in warm water, and storing overnight in a cool location.

### August

- Take cuttings from plants such as impatiens, coleus, geraniums, and wax begonias to overwinter indoors. Root the cuttings in media such as moist vermiculite, perlite, peat moss, or potting soil rather than water.

- Order spring-flower bulbs for fall planting.
- Cut flowers from the garden to dry for ever-lasting arrangements.

## Woody Landscape Plants and Fruit Trees

### June

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after blooms fade.
- Apply fungicide to prevent and control black spot on roses.
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs. Water deeply every 7 to 10 days when rain is lacking.
- Propagate deciduous shrubs, such as forsythia, lilac, pyracantha, and weigelia by stem-tip cuttings.
- Remove faded flowers and seed pods on lilac and other spring-flowering shrubs.
- Many Indiana trees are plagued by "lawn-mower blight." Be careful to avoid nicking tree trunks while mowing.
- Do not become alarmed at June drop of tree fruit. It is a natural thinning process for most trees to prevent excessive loads. Thin remaining excess fruit, if any exists, or prop up heavy branches to avoid breaking. Most fruit should be spaced 6 to 8 inches apart on a branch.
- Continue applications of home orchard fruit sprays to maintain problem-free fruit.

### July

- Keep newly established plants watered during dry weather. New plants should receive 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water every week to 10 days. Allow water to penetrate deeply into soil rather than sprinkling frequently and lightly.
- Apply a mulch around young plants to help conserve soil moisture and control weeds.
- Do not plant bare-root or ball-and-burlap stock at this time of year. Container-grown plants still may be planted, but only if you keep them well-watered.

- Continue fruit tree spray program to keep diseases and insects under control.
- Remove water sprouts (sprouts from the trunk) and suckers (sprouts from the roots) from fruit trees.
- Prop up branches of fruit trees that are heavily loaded with fruit.
- Pinch off faded rose blossoms. Continue rose spray program to control insects and diseases.
- Sod webworms can become established during this month. Because the turf is already under stress in summer, damage can be significant. Look closely for small, buff-colored moths or spotted caterpillars in the lawn. When found in large numbers, (several per square foot), apply an insecticide that is labelled for sod webworms according to label directions.

## August

- Keep newly established plants well-watered when weather is dry.
- Check trees and shrubs that have been planted in recent years for girdling damage by guy wires, burlap, or ropes.
- Don't fertilize woody plants now. It stimulates late growth that will not have time to harden-off properly before winter.
- Hand prune and destroy bagworms, fall webworms, and tent caterpillars.
- Pears are best ripened off the tree, so do not wait for the fruit to turn yellowish on the tree. Harvest pears when color of fruit changes — usually from a dark green to a lighter green — and when the fruit is easily twisted and removed from the spur.
- Prune and destroy the raspberry and blackberry canes that bore fruits this year. They will not produce fruit again next year, but they may harbor insect and disease organisms.

## Lawn

### June

- Keep grass mowed regularly, maintaining height at about one-half an inch higher than usual to help protect the crown of the plant from heat stress.
- Don't remove clippings from the lawn unless the grass is excessively tall or weedy. Clippings return some nutrients to the soil and do not add to thatch buildup.
- Water the lawn as needed to supply a total of 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week. Water deeply in a single application. Frequent, light sprinklings encourage roots to stay shallow, making them more susceptible to drought.

### July

- Bluegrass is a cool-season plant and is under great stress during hot, dry summers. If water is not applied, bluegrass becomes dormant and turns brown until more favorable conditions arrive in autumn.
- If you desire an elite quality lawn, and the lawn is watered regularly, a light application of a slow-release fertilizer in late July will improve the appearance of the lawn.

## August

- If white grubs were a problem last year, the lawn should be treated in early August to prevent further injury. Be sure to apply insecticides at the proper rate and follow with at least 1/2 inch of irrigation for best protection.
- Begin seeding new lawns or bare spots in established lawns in late August or September.
- Established lawns can be fertilized beginning in late August if moisture is adequate. Use a fertilizer high in nitrogen with a low level of phosphorus and a moderate level of potassium such as 16-4-8 or 30-3-10.

## Flowers, Vegetables, and Small Fruits

### June

- Discontinue harvest of asparagus and rhubarb around mid-June to allow foliage to develop and store food reserves for next year's harvest. Fertilize and water when dry to promote healthy growth.
- Mulch to control weeds and conserve soil moisture after soil has warmed. Many materials such as straw, chopped corn cobs, bark chips, shredded paper, and grass clippings can be used.
- Blanch (exclude light from) cauliflower when heads are just 2 inches in diameter. Tie leaves up and over the developing head.
- Keep weeds controlled. They're easier to pull when they are still young.
- Plan now for your Halloween pumpkin. Determine the days to harvest for the particular cultivar you want to plant (usually on the seed packet), and count backwards from mid-October to determine the proper planting date.
- Harvest spring plantings of broccoli, cabbage, and peas.
- Remove cool-season plants, such as radish, spinach and lettuce as they bolt, or form seed stalks, during hot, summer weather.
- Continue planting carrots, beans, and sweet corn for successive harvests.
- For staked tomatoes, remove suckers (a branch that forms where the leaf joins the stem) while they are 1 to 1-1/2 inches long to allow for easier training.
- Remove spent blooms of peony, iris, delphiniums, and other flowers.

- Pinch shoot tips of chrysanthemums, impatiens, petunias, and coleus to promote bushier growth.
- Remove tops of spring-flowering bulbs only after they have yellowed and withered.
- Continue planting gladiolus for a succession of bloom.
- Pick strawberries from the garden or a pick-your-own operation.
- Protect ripening strawberries from birds by using netting.
- Supplement natural rainfall to supply a total of 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week to the garden. Water deeply once per week rather than frequent light sprinkling.

## July

- Start seeds of broccoli, cabbage, and brussel sprouts to transplant later for a fall harvest. Harvest crops, such as tomatoes, squash, okra, peppers, beans, and cucumbers frequently to encourage further production.
- Complete succession planting of bush beans and sweet corn.
- Harvest summer squash while small and tender for best quality.
- Standard sweet corn is at its peak for only a day or so. The new Supersweet corn maintains its peak quality for a longer period. Harvest when silks begin to dry and kernels exude a milky, rather than watery or doughy, juice when punctured.
- Broccoli forms edible side shoots after the main head is removed.
- Mulch garden to control weeds and conserve soil moisture.
- Make sure potato tubers, carrot shoulders, and onion bulbs are covered with soil to prevent development of green color and off flavors. Applying a layer of mulch helps keep them covered.
- Allow blossoms on newly planted everbearing strawberry plants to develop for a fall crop.
- Renovate June-bearing strawberry plants immediately after harvest by mowing or cutting the leaves off just above the crown of the plant. Narrow the matted rows and remove excess plants, leaving the young, more vigorous ones.
- July is a good month to fertilize strawberries with one-half of a pound of actual nitrogen per 100 feet of row.

- Harvest raspberries when fully colored and easily separated from stem. Then, after harvesting is complete, prune the fruiting canes to make room for new growth.
- Remove faded blossoms from annual and perennial flowers to prevent seed formation.
- You can safely remove the foliage of spring-flowering bulbs after the foliage fades. This is also a good time to lift the bulbs for transplanting or propagation.

## August

- Keep the garden well-watered during dry weather and free of weeds, insects, and disease.
- Complete fall garden planting by direct seeding carrots, beets, kohlrabi, kale, and snap beans early this month. Lettuce, spinach, radishes, and green onions can be planted later in August and early September. Don't forget to thin seedlings to appropriate spacing as needed.
- Harvest onions after the tops yellow and fall, then cure them in a warm, dry, well-ventilated area. The necks should be free of moisture when fully cured in about a week's time.
- Harvest potatoes after the tops yellow and die. Potatoes need to be cured before storage.
- Pick beans, tomatoes, peppers, and squash often to encourage further production.
- Harvest watermelon when several factors indicate ripeness: the underside ground spot turns from whitish to creamy yellow; the tendril closest to the melon turns brown and shrivels; the rind loses its gloss and appears dull; and the melon yields a dull thud sound rather than a ringing sound when thumped.
- Harvest sweet corn when kernels are plump and ooze a milky juice when punctured with your fingernail. If the liquid is watery, you're too early; if the kernels are doughy, you're too late.
- Keep faded flowers pinched off of bedding plants to promote further flowering and to improve plant appearance.
- Spade or till soil for fall bulb planting and add a moderate amount of fertilizer.

*The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Tim Gibb, Entomology Dept. and Clark Throssell, Agronomy Dept. in the preparation of this manuscript.*

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