



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints

April 2018

Now that spring is finally here, it's time to get outside to see what can be done early. Watch the weather forecast to determine what can be done, and if it doesn't seem promising, delay some of those tasks till the end of the month. With so much to do, pace yourself but be diligent, and eventually it will all get done.

Shrubs, bushes, trees: Examine shrubs for winter injury. Prune all dead and weakened wood. Evergreen and deciduous hedges may be sheared. Prune the top narrower than the base to allow sunlight to reach the lower limbs. Apply horticultural oil to trees and shrubs that had insect issues last year. Spray when temperatures are over 40 degrees F.

Groundcovers: Groundcovers can be mowed to remove winter burn and to tidy up plants. Raise mowers to their highest settings. Fertilize and water to encourage rapid regrowth.

Roses: Winter mulches should be removed from roses and complete pruning. Remove only dead wood from climbers at this time. Cultivate lightly working in some compost.

Flower beds: Rake or remove mulches from all flower beds. To determine whether your garden soil is ready for seeds, grab a handful. If you can form it into a ball, the soil is too wet. If it crumbles through your fingers, it's ready for planting.

Potted plants and seeds: Easter lilies past blooming can be planted outdoors. Set the bulbs two to three inches deeper than they grew in the pot. Mulch if frost occurs. Start seeds indoors for heat loving crops such as eggplant, tomatoes, and squash. Begin fertilizing houseplants again.

Lawns: Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or if soil is compacted. Topdress low spots and finish overseeding thin or bare patches. Apply crabgrass preventers before April 15. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.

Vegetables: Plants started indoors should be hardened off outdoors in cold frames before being transplanted into the garden. Sow plants of all cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower into the garden. High phosphorous fertilizers help get transplants off to a quick start. Thin out crowded seedlings from early plantings of cool season crops such as beets, carrots, lettuce, onions, and radish. Don't set tomato or pepper plants out in the garden too soon. They do not like cold soil and cold nights. (under 55 degrees F)

Miscellaneous: Termites will begin to swarm. Termites can be distinguished from ants by their thick waists and straight antennae. Ants have slender waists and elbowed antennae. Mount a rain gauge on a post near the garden to keep track of precipitation so you can tell when to water. Most gardens need about one inch of rain per week between April and September. Hummingbirds return from their winter home in Central America; therefore, put your hummingbird feeds out now. Have your soil tested to see if it's nutrient rich and will allow plants to thrive. Contact the Master Gardeners of Passaic County for a low cost test.



--Sandy