



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club - Helpful Hints

April 2024

Spring is in the air for gardeners and April is a busy month in Zones 6-7. Gardeners are eager to dive into preparing their yards and gardens for new life. Check out this April Garden Checklist to ensure a great growing season full of bountiful crops and beautiful blooms. Also included is a list of April Events offered at the NJ Botanical Gardens at Skylands, Ringwood, NJ.

things to do in the garden this month...

Planning for the Spring Garden

- Keep a garden shopping list in your garden journal and jot down any supplies that you still need at the garden center.
- Use your sketched-out garden design plans to figure out where your newly acquired plants and seedlings will go.
- Lay out a garden hose to outline new garden spaces.
- If you built new raised garden beds over the winter, now is the time to set them up and fill them with raised bed soil, compost, and lots of organic matter. Calculate the amount of soil that you will need to fill up your garden beds.
- Visit the Local Extension Office for lawn and garden information as well as soil testing. The Passaic County Cooperative Extension Office is located at 1310 Route 23 North, Wayne, NJ 07470 (behind Gary's Wines).
- Complete a soil test. Obtain a sample of both your garden soil and your lawn soil. Once you get your soil test results, you can gather some of the recommended amendments that you need to boost your soil's health.
- Find out about native plants and what grows best in your region.
- Discover what plants and flowers will attract beneficial pollinators to your garden.

Shopping for Garden Supplies

- If you don't already have your seeds or need more, visit your local nursery or garden center.
- Summer bulbs such as Gladiolus, Elephant Ears, Cannas, Lilies, and Dahlias are fully stocked on store shelves now. You can start planting them later this month!
- Bare root plants are also most plentifully stocked at this time. You'll have the best options to pick from this month. This includes roses, strawberries, rhubarb, berry bushes, fruit trees, and other favorites.

- Plants and shrubs will be starting to fill nursery shelves. If they are grown in greenhouses, be sure to keep them in a sheltered environment and harden them off until all danger of frost has passed.

Preparing the Yard and Garden

- Have garden beds prepped and ready to go once the soil is workable and not saturated after a period of rain.
- Set out sticky traps to catch common insect pests like Whiteflies, Aphids, Leaf Miners, and Thrips.
- Pull up early weeds before they get established.
- If you use a drip irrigation system, begin setting things up, but don't start introducing water into hoses until after the danger of frost has passed.
- Aerate the lawn and overseed grass.
- Divide and transplant perennials that have overtaken their space in the garden beds.
- Plant your summer flowering bulbs and bare root plantings.
- Wash out your planters and containers and fill them with premium potting soil.
- Spread an organic fertilizer around shrubs and perennials.

Pruning

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after they have finished blooming.
- Pull out any partially dead shrubs or do a hard prune in an attempt to rejuvenate the plant.
- Cut back spring ground covers like creeping phlox after they have finished blooming.
- Check plants regularly for signs of pests and disease. Prune damaged, dead or diseased branches of shrubs.

Mulching and Amending the Garden

- Just as mulch insulated your garden beds over the winter, it will keep your plant roots cool as the temperatures begin to heat up.
- Adding a couple of inches of mulch to your garden beds can also help eliminate reseeding weeds and regulate soil moisture.
- Once your soil test results are in, add compost and any other necessary amendments to help build healthier soil. Support microbial life by using organic fertilizers and mulches.

Caring for the Wildlife in Your Yard

- Invite birds to your backyard to help create a wildlife habitat to control the insect population, which in turn will protect your plants.
- Fill up some bird feeders or hang some suet and watch the birds that flock to your yard.
- Do a thorough cleaning of bird feeders and birdbaths.
- Keep birdbaths filled with clean water.
- Add a birdhouse or two to help provide a safe new home for nesting.

Planting Outdoors

Always check with your local extension center for the best planting times in your area. Once you have prepped soil with amendments and weeds have been pulled, you can start sowing some seeds outdoors.

- Sow vegetable seeds such as: Beets, Corn, Lettuce, Kale, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Potatoes
- After your last frost date (April 20-24th), begin to harden off tender annuals and tender vegetables like peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant, and more.
- Place them outdoors gradually in a protected area for at least one week before planting them outdoors. Always pay close attention to the forecast, as spring weather can be unpredictable and be prepared with row covers if frost warnings are predicted.

Enjoy the outdoors, get inspired and welcome Spring with these upcoming events!

April Events 2024

New Jersey Botanical Gardens at Skylands

Morris Road, Ringwood, NJ

973-962-9534, www.njbg.org

The New Jersey State Botanical Garden at Skylands, on both State and National Registers of Historic Places, is open 8-6 every day. Admission and parking are free in winter, spring and fall. A \$5/car parking fee (\$7 out-of-state) on summer weekends and holidays. Summer weekday parking is free.

April 7 - Skylands Manor Tours 11-3

NJBG volunteer docents lead visitors on a tour of the architecture and history of Skylands Manor. Fee.

April 8 - Partial Solar Eclipse 2:30-4:30

Join Rich Cahayla-Wynne in the Carriage House courtyard to look at solar eclipse. At the 3:24pm maximum, NJ will see about 90% coverage, so it won't go totally dark but you'll see the Moon covering much of the Sun. Solar safety filters will be available, and solar safety glasses available at NJBG gift shop. Rain or clouds cancel. Free.

April 16 - Family Woodland Hike 1

Join NJBG hike leaders on easy, child-friendly hike in the Garden's woodlands. Learn a bit about the plants and animals around you on a hike designed to fit the group. Wear sturdy shoes, meet at the Carriage House. Snow/rain cancels. Free.

April 20 - Volunteer Open House and Season Kickoff 10-12

NJBG volunteers do work that's meaningful, fun, and brings delight to thousands of people. Come see the many satisfying ways you can join our team. It's gardening and so much more - many different skills are needed and welcome. Join us to learn more, meet some of our great volunteers, and start working in the Garden. Bring gloves. Meet in the Carriage House. Free.

April 20 - Early Spring Wildflower Walk 1

Join Darlene Nowak in checking out early bloomers in the woodlands of the Wildflower Garden! Wear sturdy shoes, meet at Carriage House. Rain cancels. Fee/under 12 free.

April 20,21 - Earth Day Weekend Celebration

Earth Day is Monday, April 22. There's no better way to celebrate than with a visit to NJBG, where you'll find the beauty of nature and a soothing respite from this busy world, plus a number of special programs. The Botanical Garden is open 8-8 every day, free of charge.

April 27 - Lilac Care Workshop 10-1

Come work with us in the Lilac Garden and get a hands-on lesson in lilac pruning, dead-heading and general care. Bring gloves and small tools (trowels, pruners, kneeling pads) if you have them. Water and refreshments provided. Meet at the Carriage House. Free

April 27 - Spring Wildflower Walk 1

Join Darlene Nowak in discovering many delightful spring bloomers in the woodlands of the Wildflower Garden! Wear sturdy shoes, meet at the Carriage House. Rain cancels. Fee/ under 12 free.

April 28 - Audubon: Spring Nature Walk 10

Don Torino of Bergen County Audubon Society leads a walk through the Botanical Garden to look for early spring birds - visitors and different species that inhabit our region. Meet at Carriage House Visitor Center. Snow/rain cancels. Free.

Happy Gardening and Happy Spring!