

## Use this Garden Checklist for a Pretty Landscape All Year

*The Gardening is waking Up, and you're in charge – it's time to start planting, pruning, and preparing your flower beds.*

By: Andrea Beck – Updated October 4, 2022

Just as you give your house a good spring cleaning to freshen it up after a long winter, take a similar approach to getting your garden back in shape for the warmer months. Once the snow and ice melt, it can feel a little overwhelming to consider tackling all the work a picture-perfect spring landscape requires. Use this checklist to help pace yourself as you get your flowerbeds, trees, shrubs, and other garden areas ready for summer. We've broken things down into early, middle, and late spring to help you plan your tasks, so you hit each area of your landscape before summer arrives.



PHOTO: LYNN KARLIN

### Early Spring

Start here to get your yard ready for the growing season ahead.

#### 1. Clean the flowerbeds

Clear away dead leaves or any other winter debris from the soil surfaces where you're planning to plant annual flowers and vegetables. Remove protective winter mulch from around perennials and ornamental grasses (hedge trimmers make it easy to give grass clumps a clean, even look), and cut back last year's dried foliage. To protect yourself from cuts and scrapes, remember to wear gardening gloves, especially when working with plants with prickly leaves, such as lungwort.

#### 2. Divide your perennials

A good time to divide many perennials is just before spring growth begins. Dividing perennials is a budget-friendly way to add more plants to your garden, or to share

extras with friends. It also aids in keeping your existing perennials healthy. After a few years, if your plants grow in a large clump, the middle can thin out, leaving a bare spot. Dividing the clump will encourage new growth.

### **3. Add fresh mulch around perennials**

One of the easiest ways to make your yard look polished is to add a fresh layer of mulch around the garden beds. This also helps the soil retain moisture and keeps down weeds. It often takes more mulch than you imagine to cover a bed, so it's a good idea to buy a little more than you think you'll need. Spread the mulch evenly with your gloved hands or use a rake, being careful not to layer it on too thickly or too close to your plants, which can cause diseases. Keeping the mulch level also helps it stay in place during heavy rains or wind. If you have downspouts that tend to wash away mulch, one fix is to replace it with river rocks.

### **4. Prune trees and shrubs**

If you didn't prune in winter, now is the time to trim your fruit trees. Prune before the buds begin to break into bloom, or you'll stress the tree and get a tiny crop (or possibly none). It's also a good time to prune summer-blooming trees and shrubs, like potentilla and butterfly bush, just before they push out new growth.

### **5. Perform basic maintenance on your hardscaping**

Check stonework for frost heaves, particularly in paths and edging. Check the general condition of your deck or patio and make any needed repairs. Clean off outdoor furniture so it's ready when you are for relaxing after a busy day in the garden.

### **6. Plant vegetables**

Hardy, cool-season vegetables, like potatoes, artichokes, peas, and some lettuces, germinate best in cool soil, so plant them in early spring, once the soil has thawed. They should be ready to harvest by early summer.



Photo: Andrew Drake

## **Midspring**

Halfway through the season, you should start to see your spring landscape take shape, as more and more bulbs, perennials, shrubs, and trees start growing, possibly even blooming. With most of the cleanup completed, you can get started adding new plants.

### **1. Clean bird feeders**

Some people like to take down their bird feeders in spring and store them away until fall. If you want to leave them up year-round, now's a good time to wash them out and fill them with fresh seed or nectar.

### **2. Make notes as you watch the spring show**

Some of your spring bulbs should be starting to flower. Enjoy the blooms, and take note of any empty spots where you'll want to plant bulbs later in the fall.

### **3. Plant new perennials and cold-hardy annuals**

Freshly planted perennials need a little time to get settled and grow new roots before hot summer weather hits. For some quick garden color, add a few cool-season annuals, like pansies or snapdragons. They also work well in containers, where they'll brighten your front porch.

### **4. Add new trees and shrubs**

Plant as soon as the ground is no longer frozen. The earlier you can do this, the better, so your trees and shrubs have enough time to grow new roots before temperatures start getting hot.

### **5. Apply fresh mulch**

Once you're finished planting, add a fresh layer of mulch around all your new plants. If you mulch now, before weeds have a chance to sprout, you'll have next-to-no weeding come summer.



LYNN KARLIN PHOTOGRAPHY

## **Late Spring**

In late spring, you can start cleaning up flowers that have already bloomed. It's also time to get planting in earnest to fill out your garden.

### **1. Deadhead flowering bulbs**

Remove spent blossoms from spring-flowering bulbs; this encourages the plants to store energy for next year rather than expend it to make seeds. Let the foliage die back on its own, and don't remove it until it's completely yellow or dried up.

### **2. Shop for summer annuals**

Pick out flats of your favorite summer annuals, like petunias, impatiens, and zinnias. Choose plants that aren't yet in bloom because they'll be stronger.

### **3. Start warm-season vegetables**

While you're harvesting the radishes and lettuces you sowed early in the spring, you can transplant seedlings of warm-season crops, like tomatoes, peppers, and all sorts of herbs.

### **4. Plant summer-blooming bulbs**

While spring-blooming bulbs should be planted in the fall, summer-blooming bulbs, like dahlias and gladiolus, should be planted once there's no more threat of frost. Check your area's average last frost date for a general idea of when to plant these bulbs, then get them in the ground once the soil has warmed up.

Use this spring landscaping checklist, and you'll have one of the best-looking gardens on the block. While there are still a few maintenance chores you should do every season, once you power through these tasks early, you'll have more time to kick back and enjoy your landscape throughout summer.

***Source: Better Homes and Gardens***