

April in the Tallahassee Garden

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April is a busy month in the garden. If you have the time, energy and inclination, there is plenty to do.

Planting: Now is the time to begin planting warm season annuals and perennials. When planting perennials, it's especially important to prepare the soil so that you have good drainage. You're hoping these plants will last for many years to come, so the extra effort now will be well worth the trouble.

Perennials which perform well in our area to plant now include agapanthus, Philippine violet, Shasta daisy, coreopsis, crocosmia, verbena, plumbago, daylilies and Louisiana iris, to name just a few. Try to be deliberate and thoughtful when choosing perennials. As a rule of thumb, plant in groups of three, five or more. Daylilies and other perennials may be divided now, if needed, but do it soon.

Annuals to seed directly into the landscape include zinnias, marigolds, sunflowers, cleome and nasturtiums. Annuals to transplant in full sun, include ageratum, celosia, gomphrena, nicotiana, salvia and many more now available in garden centers.

For shadier areas plant impatiens, begonias, coleus, Blue Daze, pentas, and torenia. Lawn care - If you are planning to fertilize your lawn, April is the time to do it. Use a 15-0-15 fertilizer with 7.5% water-insoluble or slow-release nitrogen at a rate of no more than 6 pounds of fertilizer per 1000 square feet. Centipede grass should do well with half that amount.

Vegetable garden: If you haven't already done so, plant tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, squash, cucumbers, pole beans, okra and sweet potatoes. Be sure to keep your vegetables well watered. They will need one to one and one-half inches of water per week during the growing season. To prevent the development of fungus and plant diseases, water in the mornings so that plants can dry out before evening. This is also a good time to plant basil, dill, chives and rosemary.

Trees and shrubs: If trees and shrubs seem healthy and vigorous, they probably don't need fertilizing. If needed, fertilize spring-blooming trees and shrubs after the blossoms fade. Use a 15-0-15 fertilizer with 7.5% water-insoluble or slow-release nitrogen. Fertilize the rooting zone at the rate of no more than three tablespoons per 10 square feet. If you fertilize your lawn with a weed-and-feed fertilizer, be sure none of it gets into the rooting zone of your trees and shrubs. Keep them well mulched, with the mulch pulled back from the stems or trunks.

Live oak leaves are falling now and they make very good mulch. Rake them into your beds or if your neighbor has been kind enough to rake his leaves, bag them and place them at the curb, then use those.



The old mulch under roses, camellias, and azaleas should be raked out and disposed of. Fungus can hide there and re-infect your plants' flowers. In Spring the older leaves on camellias, magnolias and other evergreens start to yellow and fall. They will be followed by new growth.

House plants: Repot them now and place outside under trees or in a shady spot to rejuvenate them.

For more information about gardening in our area, visit the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension website at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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