

April in the Tallahassee Garden

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Shrubs and Trees: Prune spring-blooming trees and shrubs as they finish blooming, if needed. Fertilize using a fertilizer especially formulated for acid loving plants. Or use a 15-0-15 fertilizer with 7.5% water-insoluble or slow-release nitrogen. Distribute fertilizer evenly over the root zone at the rate of no more than three tablespoons per 10 square feet. Azaleas have shallow roots which can be burned by excess fertilizer. 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. Replace old mulch with new to discourage the spread of fungus and disease

Annuals and Perennials : Popular perennials for our area to plant now include daylilies, lantana, salvias, sedum, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, Philippine violet, Shasta daisy, verbena, plumbago, Louisiana iris, summer phlox and gaillardia. When planting remove flowers and buds to encourage the plants to become well established before flowering. Divide and transplant fall blooming perennials including asters, bee balm, shasta daisies, yarrow and chrysanthemums. Plant seeds for annual flowers like marigolds and zinnias. Annuals to transplant in full sun, include ageratum, celosia, gomphrena, nicotiana, and salvia. For shadier areas plant impatiens, begonias, coleus, evolvulus (blue daze), pentas and torenia.

Bulbs, Rhizomes, Corms and Tubers: Fertilize amaryllis, Easter lilies and other late spring-blooming bulbs as the foliage appears. Plant summer blooming bulbs: in shade or part shade plant achimenes, walking iris, gingers, agapanthus, and crinums; in sunny locations plant gladiolus, dahlias, lilies, cannas, and society garlic.

Roses: Begin fertilizing roses now and continue every four to six weeks until September. Climbing roses may be pruned as soon as they finish blooming. A shrub rose with excellent disease resistance, 'Lady Elsie May', has been designated an All-American Rose Selection for 2005. See other selections at <http://www.rose.org>.

Lawn care: April is the month to begin fertilizing lawns. 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. On centipede grass use half that amount.

Vegetables and Herbs: March was cool so the soil is just now warming up. Plant seeds for bush and pole beans, cucumber, cantaloupe, pumpkin, summer and winter squash. Also set out transplants of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. Okra and southern peas, lima beans, sweet potatoes and watermelons require warmer soil so plant them later in the month. In full sun and well-drained soil plant herbs like basil, summer savory, oregano, thyme, mints, dill, chives and rosemary. To prevent the development of fungus and plant diseases, for all plants but especially for vegetables, water in the mornings so the plants dry out before evening.

Houseplants: Being outside for the summer is good for many houseplants. Move them gradually into the sun or part-shade starting first in deep shade. Also replot the plants that are root bound or have not been replotted in the last few years.

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