April To-Do List:

• This is fertilizer season, so don't forget to feed your plants! We carry a complete line of organic fertilizers for all of your feeding needs.

• Slugs are launching their spring invasion on your garden, so be sure to place slug bait out to prevent damage. We recommend Sluggo, which is safe for use around kids and pets.

• This is the perfect time to plant cool season vegetables! Lettuce, cabbage, and many other leafy vegetables thrive in this cooler weather, and will make good use of your garden space until the weather warms up.

• Mulching flowerbeds now will result in less weed growth and better summer moisture retention.

• Keep an eye on fruit trees and other disease prone plants, and treat for disease as necessary. We have a new all-natural fruit tree spray that will remedy most disease and insect problems.

When Spring Attacks

The weather has been rather interesting lately, but that is no surprise to anyone who has lived here for any amount of time. If you are new here, welcome to Oregon!

We have had what you could call a “False Spring”, which really isn’t too unusual around here. Early March gave us some absolutely beautiful weather, and got a lot of people really excited about spring gardening. Late March decided that it wanted to be winter again, and left us with sub-freezing temperatures that did some damage to the more tender plants.

So what do you do with those plants nipped by the cold? It really depends on the type of plant. Most tender summer annuals are probably goners, while hardy trees and shrubs that have frozen new foliage will generally recover if given a little bit of time. The best thing to do is to wait and see, and have patience while the plants adjust and recover. We still aren’t really safe from frost until early May, so there are still a few weeks of potentially cold weather left. On the flip side, that means that our season for planting hardy shrubs, trees, perennials, and lawns has been lengthened, as these are all better planted while the weather is still cool so they have time to settle in before summer.

Inside...

• Greener Gardening - Lawns
• Mason Bees
• Arbor Week
• Upcoming Events
Greener Gardening is a new monthly feature where we talk about concepts in natural gardening, sustainability, and more environmentally sound landscape solutions! We have certainly noticed the growing movement towards greener gardening practices, and realize that all of the information thrown about can be very confusing or intimidating.

Our goal in these features is to explore some of the ins and outs of green gardening, to try and explain why you would want to try some of these methods, and to give you the information needed to make informed decisions about your own gardening practices.

**Greener Gardening - Lawns**

Of all the plants in the garden, the lawn is usually the one that gets the most attention. The search for the perfect lush, green lawn has been known to send people to madness, spawning so many different lawn care products that it can make your head spin. You can’t even turn on the television anymore without seeing lawn care commercials telling you that if you use this certain product it will cure all of your lawn woes and somehow make you smile more. The fact of the matter is that the average home lawn is usually the least environmentally friendly place in the landscape, and is often a huge waste of natural resources. We have traditionally dumped chemical after chemical on our lawns, hoping to kill this or that, or somehow make it a slightly deeper green.

The result? Artificial expanses of green that require more and more attention and are completely reliant on us to keep them going. The obvious solution is to just get rid of the lawn, but suggesting that to certain people may result in personal injury inflicted by a freshly sharpened garden shovel. A reasonable compromise is to remove excess lawn areas, and pare your lawn down to a more manageable size. Less lawn means less effort, less time spent on maintenance, less water and other resources used, and more time playing lawn darts or whatever it is that you prefer to use your lawn for.

So now that you have managed to shrink down your lawn to a manageable size, what other ways can you make it “greener”? Changing the chemical and fertilizer products used is usually a good step. A great way to start is to switch to a more reasonable lawn
fertilizer. Many synthetic commercial lawn fertilizers contain lots of really quickly released nitrogen, and very little else. This is great for people that like to watch their grass grow and mow it every 3 hours, but it provides no long term solutions or benefits to normal people. The better solution is to use a more reasonably balanced or organic fertilizer, which allow for more steady and reliable growth. Organic fertilizers also have the benefit of promoting soil health, which in the long run will make your grass healthier and durable.

As for chemical use, we dump an incredible amount of unnecessary pesticides on our lawns. There are literally hundreds of products out there to kill everything from crabgrass to cranefly, and huge marketing campaigns aimed at selling these products by convincing people that their lawns are in peril and will surely die if they don’t use their product. In reality, most of these products are chemically identical, as there a really only a handful of chemicals commonly used for lawn care. If your lawn is healthy in the first place, you won’t have much need for gallons of weed killer, as the lawn is a much fiercer competitor when healthy than any dandelion that ever lived. Also, the prevalence of insect infestation in lawns has been highly overstated. Cranefly are not nearly the problem they are made out to be, but are a convenient scapegoat for poor lawn care, and sure do motivate the sale of a lot of insecticide. When you do have a real problem with insects like cranefly, there are many safer and more targeted products available now than the traditional “kill everything that moves” products.

We could go on and on about different green products and methods for growing lawns, but in the end the important thing is that you have a choice when it comes to caring for your lawn, and there are certainly many ways to “green up” your lawn care. We will be talking more about lawn care in future newsletters, but you can always stop by our store and ask us questions, or simply peruse our selection of natural and alternative lawn care products!
The Buzz on Pollination (We apologize for the pun...)

Sadly, our native honeybees have been disappearing from the area over the past decade or so due to a problem with parasitic mites. You may have noticed that there just aren’t as many out and about as there used to be, and this is bad news for fruit tree pollination. Most of our fruit trees and shrubs rely on bee pollinators to set fruit, and without our honeybee friends, our crops start to dwindle. Enter the Orchard Mason Bee, the quieter yet harder working and more durable cousin to the honeybee.

Orchard Mason Bees are another type of native bee, but are actually quite different from your common honeybee. Honeybees live in hive colonies, collect more nectar than pollen (to make honey), and can be pretty aggressive at times. Mason Bees are more solitary creatures, preferring to live in individual burrows than in large organized colonies. They do not produce any honey, so they are much more interested in gathering pollen than nectar (although they do snag a little bit of nectar now and again). This, coupled with their short range from their nests, makes them a much more efficient localized pollinator than your average wandering honeybee. Mason bees are also far less aggressive than honeybees, and will only fight back if severely threatened.

Mason Bees are simple to take care of, so you don’t have to worry about looking after swarming masses of bees. Mason Bees actually only live for about two months in spring, so they are out pollinating when you need them to be, and out of sight the rest of the year. While they will find holes in trees or houses to lay their eggs, you can provide them with nesting blocks, which they will gladly use. They look for holes slightly larger than themselves to nest in, and then proceed to create a series of pockets, each containing an egg, a loaf of pollen, and a little bit of nectar to feed the new bees. They seal this all up with mud, and once the young Mason Bees hatch, they will spend then next 9-10 months developing in their sealed tubes before the re-emerge in spring to start the cycle all over again. Each year will see an large increase in your Mason Bee population, as each female is capable of laying several eggs during her lifetime. All you need to do is give them a place to live, and they will take care of themselves!

We now have Mason Bees available at Farmington Gardens! You purchase them in paper tubes that contain the dormant adults, and place them outside in nesting blocks or some other suitable place. They will instinctively emerge as soon as the weather is appropriate, and start collecting pollen and building nests for next year’s bees!
Celebrate Arbor Week, Plant a Tree for the Future!

**Oregon Revised Statute 336.015** - “The first full week in April shall be known as Arbor Week. In order that pupils in the public schools shall be made better aware of the benefits of the preservation and perpetuation of forests and the growing of timber and of the environment, the district school board shall cause to be conducted, during school hours, activities which tend to encourage the planting, protection and preservation of trees and shrubs and a greater understanding of the environment and means for preserving and improving it.”

Most people take trees for granted, and don’t think much about them until they are gone. As our cities grow, and our society becomes more urbanized, trees become a more precious commodity. Arbor Day is a day to celebrate trees, and all that they mean to us. Oregon is unique in that we celebrate an entire Arbor Week the first full week of April, reflecting the value and importance that we place on our trees.

Arbor week is an excellent time to plant a tree, to learn more about trees and what they do for us, or to teach children the value of trees so that they will grow up to respect the importance of trees in our everyday lives. Trees are an investment, and will grow in value as they age. The tree you plant today will be the tree that shades the next generation, cleans their air, and beautifies their surroundings.

Landscape Installation and Design Services

Farmington Gardens is pleased to offer landscape design and installation services! We can now assist you in every aspect of your landscape needs, from plant selection and design to delivery and installation. Our staff of landscape professionals can guide you through the entire process, taking care of the hard parts of creating the garden of your dreams so that you can just sit back and enjoy it.

To request a quote for landscape design services, you can e-mail us at design@farmingtongardens.com. Our landscape installation team may be reached at install@farmingtongardens.com. We look forward to working with you!
Upcoming Events

April 12, 11 AM

Farmington Gardens’ owner Linda Eshraghi is passionate about Japanese maples—she will be here to share her very favorite varieties. Which ones are best for containers? For winter interest? For variegated foliage? Afterwards, everyone is invited (a short 3 miles down the road) to a special behind-the-scenes tour of Eshraghi Nurseries to see how our trees are skillfully grafted and grown.

May 3rd, 11 AM

Its vegetable gardening day! Vern Nelson, Oregonian columnist, will talk about his tips for a successful edible garden, and perhaps introduce some new-to-you veggies. Learn all about Plant a Row for the Hungry; the Sunshine Pantry will be here to share the impact your food donations make.

All of these classes are free; registration is requested: call 503.649.4568