

April To-Do List:

- This is a great time to plant cool season vegetables, like peas and most leafy vegetables. It's also a great time to plant onions, garlic, and potatoes.
- This is also a great time to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials to give them a little bit of time to establish before the heat of summer.
- Your lawn should be growing again, and you should really feed it if you haven't yet.
- Moss in the lawn is usually a sign of poor drainage, compaction and/or acidic soil conditions. You should have your soil pH checked, as turf grasses prefer a more neutral pH. Lime applications can correct acidic conditions, and will usually deter the moss as well.
- Slugs are off on their annual garden invasion, but you can keep the damage to a minimum with regular applications of slug bait. We recommend Sluggo®, an organic, child and pet friendly alternative to traditional slug control products.
- Keep little weeds cleaned up now so they don't become big weeds in summer.



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Spring is Here!

You've all probably noticed the gradual increase in outdoor blooms recently, and this is just the beginning! Spring officially began at 4:44 AM on Friday, March 20th, and it is all uphill from here. The spring warm-up has been a little bit slow this year, but the temperatures are still warming enough to spur lots of new plant growth. Right now we are seeing the earliest blooming trees and shrubs finally putting on their show a bit behind schedule, but the rest are not far behind.

The gradual warm-up also means that the nursery is filling up quickly, and the plants are putting on fresh new growth at a brisk pace. This is one of the better times of year to plant hardy trees, shrubs and perennials, and the selection is fantastic! Planting in the cooler seasons allows plants to settle in and establish a little before the heat of summer sets in.

Besides ornamental plants for the landscape, our selection of edibles is outstanding, and this is a great time to plant! Apples, pears, cherries, plums, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, strawberries, onions, garlic, potatoes, traypack vegetables, and many more are all in abundant supply at this time of year.

And as always, we are here to assist you in any way we can to make 2009 your most successful year in the garden yet!

Inside...

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April is Arbor Month

April is Arbor Month, a month of celebration and awareness of trees. April 24th is our official nationally observed Arbor Day, while many states and municipalities have their own specific events set aside during the month. Oregon is especially rich with tree life, and specifically designates the first full week in April as Arbor Week.

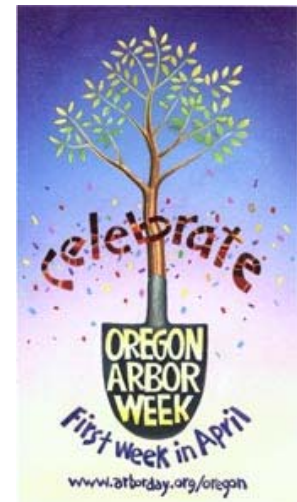
Trees do their job 12 months out of the year, so it is only fair to take some time out of our busy schedules and pay attention to one of our greatest natural and urban resources. What can you do during Arbor Month?

- Educate yourself about trees. Trees are fascinating organisms, and there are endless informational resources available for you to read through.
- Teach your children about trees. Today's children are the future stewards of our natural and urban forests. Helping them connect with and learn about trees today is an investment in the future.
- Plant a tree. Trees are wonderful things, and do so much for us with and ask little in return. They clean the air, shade our homes, provide sanctuary for wildlife, and bring beauty to our lives. Planting a tree is also a great family activity. Planting a tree as a family and watching it grow over the years is truly a wonderful experience!
- Go on a tree walk. The best way to appreciate trees is to experience them. Go on a walk in the woods . Go up to Hoyt Arboretum and spend a few hours meandering



through the tree specimens. Or just take a walk through your neighborhood. Just for fun, imagine what it would be like with out any trees, or even half as many trees. Then go home and plant a new tree.

If you are thinking about planting a new tree and aren't sure where to start, or would simply like to find out more about trees, we are having a class on Saturday, April 4th at 2 PM covering the different aspects of selecting trees based on your needs and site characteristics. Our resident arborist (and newsletter writer/editor) will be going over everything you will need to know to make an informed tree decision, and answer any tree questions that you may have.



How **NOT** to Plant Trees

Since we are on the subject of trees, here is a tree planting article with a twist. We spend a lot of time explaining to people how to properly plant and care for trees, but there are also a handful of things that you really *don't* want to do. **So, here is our list of ways NOT to plant a tree.**



- **Plant too deep.** Planting too deep kills trees. Maybe not today or tomorrow (although this does happen in some cases), but in most cases planting too deep will eventually lead to tree failure. When planting, the tree and soil should meet at the same level as was when purchased, with no extra soil piled up on the trunk. Deep planting can cause rot, eventual support root failure (and the development of a weaker secondary root system), slow establishment, and generally poor results.
- **Mulch Volcano!** This is becoming less common, but some people still like to pile bark-dust up around the trunk thinking that it is protecting the tree. This poses the same hazard as the previous point.
- **Plant in pure compost or potting soil.** A tree's roots will try to stretch out at least 1.5-2 times the width of the tree canopy. Which means that your tree will need to root out into the surrounding soil as it grows. By giving your tree extremely loose and rich soil just in the planting hole, you encourage it to grow only into that soil and not the surrounding soil. This is magnified when you have compacted clay soil, since no tree in its right mind would try to root into that when it can just keep circling round and round in the nice soil.

The other problem is that a pocket of loose soil surrounded by heavy soil creates encourages water to drain into the planting hole, and can drown your tree. *The best idea and goal when planting is to create a transition soil, with no more than 50% (or less if you can) organic material added to the existing soil to give your tree a head start, but also acclimate to its new home.*



- **Fertilize heavily.** You will probably never see the most important growing period in a tree's

How **NOT** to Plant Trees... continued

life: Root Development. A tree knows exactly what it needs to do to get going, and will work on developing a solid root system before putting on a lot of new top growth. Of course, we all want our trees to grow fast and get big, but this is not always appropriate or sustainable.

Heavy fertilizing encourages rapid limb growth, but this is often at the expense of a healthy and well developed root system. *We recommend an organic fertilizer with low nitrogen rates and beneficial microbes for proper establishment.*



- **Stake rigidly so that the tree can't move.** We actually don't recommend staking new trees unless absolutely necessary, and then only temporarily. A tree that is free to flex in the wind develops a strong, tapered trunk that can withstand time and the weight of a growing tree. A staked tree doesn't put as much work into building a strong trunk, because it doesn't really have to with the stake holding it up. Another problem is that if left on the tree, the stake can eventually become part of the tree, or the tying material can cut into the growing trunk.

If you do have to stake (and you probably don't), use multiple stakes and tether the tree so that it can flex a bit, keep a close eye on the tree to make sure that the stakes aren't causing damage, and remove the support as soon as possible so that the tree can grow on its own.

- **Plant in the wrong place.** This really kills a lot of trees, or causes them to be removed prematurely due to conflicts. Before planting, be sure to do your research. Examine the planting site, the sun exposure, the soil, and determine how much room you have. Learn about your options, and make sure that they are compatible with your site conditions and restrictions.



So now that you know how **NOT** to plant a tree, you're one step ahead of the game, and can avoid some of the common tree planting mistakes. Tree planting really isn't a difficult undertaking, and success is easy if you do your research ahead of time. And as always, we're always here to answer any of your questions and get you pointed in the right direction.

The Ultimate Soil Amendment

Amending your soil is one of the most important things that you can do for your plants. Whether your gardening is more edible or ornamental, proper soil amendment will take you from mediocre to outstanding gardening with just a little bit of work.

Good soil has at least 10% organic material by volume, but it is rare to actually find that in a home garden. In nature, plants and animals are constantly being recycled back into the soil as they die, creating a nutrient cycle that keeps things running without any human intervention. In our home gardens, most of us are “neat freaks” in that we are constantly cleaning up debris and removing the material that would be recycled back into the ground in nature. This creates a gap in the nutrient cycle, which requires human intervention to bridge. Many different types of compost and mulch can be used to fill this gap, and we have certainly tried many of them. The one product that stands out from the rest though, is *Powerplant* dairy compost.



Powerplant compost is produced from dairy waste at a large dairy in Boardman, OR. Dairies create a huge amount of animal waste, and they were looking for a creative, sustainable, and environmentally friendly way to mitigate this problem. What developed was a 150 acre composting facility that produces some of the best compost we have ever seen. The raw material is placed in long windrows on the composting site, where it is constantly monitored and tested for quality. As it breaks down, the compost heats up, and is required to reach 135 degrees for a month to kill off any weed seeds or pathogens. We love the fact that this compost does not contain viable weed seeds or disease causing organisms, unlike other composts we have worked with in the past. The end result is a clean, nutrient rich, low salt, and pH appropriate compost that works miracles in the garden.

Even more exciting, this past year *Powerplant* received OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) certification, which means that it is certified appropriate for use in organic gardens. This is a difficult status to obtain, and is one more reason to appreciate this product.

So if you are looking for a quality soil amendment, look no further. We currently carry it in bulk for pickup or delivery (for an extra delivery fee). We also use it as a primary ingredient in our garden planting mix, and it is the main material in all of our store display plantings!

Our Annual Spring Caution

Spring is here, but we are still in the early stages of spring, and there is a good chance that we won't be done with occasional cold weather for a month or so. We may have a day or two of warm sunny weather scattered about, but our soil is still pretty cold, and we can still have bouts of frost. The soil doesn't warm up instantly, it is a gradual process that requires time and consistently warmer weather.



The average last frost date in our area is usually in early to mid-May. It may or may not actually turn out that way every year, but historically planting frost-tender plants outside before that point is pretty risky. Warm season vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and corn will not tolerate frost, and will not really grow until the soil warms up to 60-70° anyway. Summer annuals like petunias, impatiens, and zinnias will also be killed or severely damaged by frost.

We will be slowly bringing in some of the warm season vegetables and annuals over the next few weeks for those who are adventurous, but we strongly recommend caution and patience for the next month as the weather and soil warm up. These warm season plants will not grow anyway until the soil is warm, so you really won't gain anything by planting them early.

Don't worry though. When the time is right, we will have all of the summer annuals and vegetables you could possibly need to fill your garden. And there will still be plenty of time for your prize tomatoes and giant pumpkins to grow and prosper!

The Farmington Gardens Blog

We would like to remind you about The Farmington Gardens Blog, and invite you to stop by and visit if you haven't already. Our main website is full of information that stays pretty consistent (so that people can always easily find our availability list, info sheets, and current store hours), but our blog is constantly changing and updating based on what's going on around us in the gardening world. We regularly post information on upcoming events, sale items, product reviews, and photo galleries of what's currently blooming. And to make it even more useful, you can subscribe to our blog via the built in RSS news feed!

Visit The Farmington Gardens Blog at blog.farmingtongardens.com

It's Not Dead Yet!

This was an interesting winter to say the least, and we've already heard lots of stories about New Zealand Flax flattened by the snow, snapped limbs on trees, Arborvitae hedges that look like a bomb went off, and various other tales of winter plant woes. Don't worry quite yet though, there is more hope than it may seem at the moment.



We have had rough winters before, and a lot of plants, both established and new, suffered damage. With minor corrective pruning and patience though, most of these plants recover once the weather warms up. The key term there is "when the weather warms up". We are going into our annual spring warming trend now, but we still have a long way to go, and the air and soil temperatures aren't nearly high enough to get these plants to start pushing new growth.

Winter damaged plants are set back a little, and will be slow to start putting out new growth, often not showing signs of recovery until late May or even June. The temptation is often to rip them out and start over, especially as we progress into spring and new growth hasn't yet appeared, but this will sacrifice the existing plants' root growth and establishment.

The important thing is to not give up yet. Be patient, and give your plants a little bit of time to recover from the uncommonly harsh winter. In many cases, you will be pleasantly surprised as the plants that you thought were lost come bouncing back to life.

Installation and Design Services

Now that the weather is warming up, many of you are taking a good long look at your yard and feeling overwhelmed. What do I put where, how many do I need, and how am I going to get this all done before next spring comes around?

Farmington Gardens offers professional landscape installation and design services to help you out with all of your landscape needs! Our design team can plan out your landscape and help get you pointed in the right direction. Our installation team can take care of making that plan a reality, or plant some of those more difficult items that require some extra resources.

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For Landscape Design, email design@farmingtongardens.com

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Upcoming Events

April 4th, 10 AM

Carl Grimm, Metro's Natural Gardening Specialist, on "**Landscaping with Organic Edibles.**" Carl combines edible, ornamental and native landscaping tips to help home gardeners kick the chemical habit in style. Learn the essentials to organic gardening, as well as new ideas for bringing beauty to the veggie bed and food to the flower border – what a great concept!

April 4th, 2 PM

"**The Ins and Outs of Choosing Trees**", with **Brian Schiffer**, our resident arborist. April is Arbor Month, when we celebrate the benefits and value trees bring to our community. Join Brian for an in-depth discussion on choosing the right tree for the right place and how to correctly plant your new tree to get it well established.

April 19th, 3PM

Celina Gomez and Linda Shively, on "**Kitchen Gardening 101.**" If you've ever wanted to grow your own tasty vegetables, but didn't know where to begin, then this is the class for you. We will cover the basics of backyard edible gardening, from the benefits of raised beds, to soil preparations, to choosing a great selection of culinary plants. We'll wander out to our demonstration vegetable garden, so you can see what's going on there and how we manage to grow so much in such a small space.

April 25th, 1PM

Linda Eshraghi on "**Japanese Maples**". This is for the Japanese maple enthusiast! We will meet at Eshraghi Nursery and tour our propagation and growing operation with owner Linda Eshraghi. You will not want to miss this one - it was a very popular tour last year. This event will be held just down the road from Farmington Gardens, so stop by the store for a map and directions. And a special bonus for this class: you will be able to special order directly from Eshraghi Nursery for this day only!

Classes are free. Please call us at 503-649-4568, or email events@farmingtongardens.com to register.