

What to do April 2026

April 5 to April 11

Perennials: Some established plants may be slow to emerge in the garden, so be careful not to disturb them when you dig nearby. Put supports in place for peonies and other tall perennials that may become floppy before the plants get too big to work with easily.

Flowers: Start bedding plants indoors now and transition them to the garden when the weather warms around Memorial Day. Take cuttings of houseplants that do double duty in the garden, such as begonia, coleus, geranium, and many varieties of spurflower (aka Swedish ivy, Cuban oregano).

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue to start seeds of slow-growing tender crops indoors and acclimate hardy cool season vegetables to outdoor conditions. You can also direct seed or plant successions of early crops, such as beets, carrots, collards and kale, lettuce, mustard, peas, radishes, Swiss chard, turnips, and others when the soil is workable. Plant strawberries on a site where they and brambles, or tomato family plants have not previously grown. Prune apples and pears. After removing dead, diseased, or broken branches, take out crossing and competing growth, sucker and watersprouts (no more than 10 to 25 percent of the total growth). Retain fruiting spurs as much as possible. Wait until after flowering to prune peaches.

Trees and Shrubs: Examine shrubs for winter burn and other injuries, and prune dead or weakened wood. Prune tea roses as the new growth appears, removing stems that suffered winter damage. Wait to cut back climbing or rambling roses until after they flower.

Lawns: Crabgrass begins to germinate as forsythia leaves begin to emerge (the shrubs are gold and green) and Callery pears are in bloom. The best defense against crabgrass and other weeds is thick turf that shades the soil, which reduces weed germination and space for weeds to grow. Most lawn grasses need full sun (at least 6 hours a day) to develop a dense cover and grow well. If bare spots or thin turf need to be seeded, do this now (best when the soil is 50°F at a depth of 2 inches). Test soil pH and nutrients, and add amendments if warranted. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Houseplants: Prune leggy plants. As you see new growth, fertilize according to label directions if needed.

General: Have you been wondering about robot mowers? Learn more in the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester 2026 Home Garden Lecture Series: *Climate Anxiety: How to Help*.

Wednesday, April. 15 from 10 to 11 am, remote on Zoom, \$5. All lectures are remote on Zoom. A ticket to any single remote lecture is \$5 and the tour is \$20 (while there is space).

Speaker: Carl Schimenti is an Urban Environmental Scientist in the Turfgrass Science Research Unit at Cornell University. He has worked on reduced-risk turfgrass management of NY State Park golf courses through judicious use of pesticides, nutrients, and water, and now focuses on data-driven management to maximize ecosystem service value of urban green spaces.

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April 12 to 18

Perennials: As you add new plants, consider natives that will thrive under the conditions on site without added fertilizer. Many of our native soils contain adequate nutrients for plant growth, so it is best to test the soil

before adding fertilizer or other amendments. When fertilizer is not needed, it can encourage weak, spindly growth that is prone to insect attack and diseases. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Flowers: Many hardy bulbs such as potted crocus, daffodil, Easter lily, hyacinth, and *species* tulips that have been forced for spring events may be saved and planted for blossoms in future years. Once the flowers fade, cut off the spent flowers and put the pots in a sunny window. Continue to water them until the leaves turn yellow and the weather outdoors has settled. At that time, plant the bulbs in the garden at the recommended depth for the species and allow them to naturally go dormant. Forced bulbs may take more than one season to recover and bloom again. Hybrid tulips are often treated as annuals since they may not rebloom for many years, if at all.

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue to plant early season vegetables outdoors as the soil becomes workable. Sow seeds of carrots, peas and radishes and salad greens directly in the ground. Orient tall plants to north and shorter varieties to the south for steady sun exposure. Remember to rotate crops to a new spot in the garden so pests and diseases are less likely to build to damaging levels. Indoors, begin to sow seeds for tomatoes. Consider tomato varieties resistant to late blight and with “VF” or “VFN” designation. Diseases such as Verticillium and Fusarium wilts require long rotation cycles away from future tomatoes and related vegetable family plantings. Use resistant varieties to reduce the chance of hard to manage root Nematodes. If you’ve had fruit tree pests in past seasons, plan for management now. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Trees and Shrubs: Some trees do best when planted or transplanted in early spring, because this timing gives them at least 6 to 8 weeks of suitable growing conditions to begin to become established before they are stressed by hot weather. Examples include: broadleaved evergreens, dogwood, magnolia, oak, redbud, tulip tree and willow, among others.

Lawns: When the grass reaches 4 inches, begin mowing to a height of 3 or 3½ inches. Consider extending mowing frequency if possible, as this helps to regulate and slow the growth rate of the turf. Hold the fertilizer until Memorial Day, or better yet, skip the spring fertilizer and check back in early fall if this is needed. Interplanting with clover can help to reduce the need for fertilization. Clover and other low growing flowering plants also provide sustenance for bees and other beneficials.

Houseplants: Tropical plants aren’t ready to go outside, but begin sizing up containers and cleaning up appropriate areas outdoors where the plants can spend the summer.

General: Stay out of the garden when the ground is wet or when it’s raining. Working in wet plants can spread diseases, and can compact the soil, impeding the growth of plant roots.

Having issues with animals in your garden? Learn more in the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester 2026 Home Garden Lecture Series: *Structural Defensive Gardening*.

Wednesday, May. 13 from 10 to 11 am, remote on Zoom, \$5. All lectures are remote on Zoom. A ticket to any single remote lecture is \$5 and the tour is \$20 (while there is space).

Speaker: Louis Petralia is a Westchester CCE Master Gardener Volunteer, as well as an attorney, teach ad lawn enthusiast. As a CCE Master Gardener Volunteer, he spends his time working the Demonstration Garden at Hart’s Brook Park and Preserve in Hartsdale, NY.

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Perennials: Continue dividing overgrown perennials. As daffodils fade, snap off the tops to prevent seed pod formation. Leave the foliage until it is yellow or brown. Next year's bulb and flower development depend on food produced by the leaves, so avoid braiding or wrapping the leaves to make them look neat.

Flowers: Observe borders and other potential garden areas with an eye to find areas where bulbs might brighten or fill in spots next year. Put a marker in the ground, or make a reminder note on the calendar to purchase bulbs in late summer for delivery and planting in the coming fall.

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue to harden off and plant hardy vegetables. Start seedlings in peat pots, break off the rims as you transplant them. If part of the peat pot sticks out of the soil it can wick moisture away from tender roots. To prevent early flowering, wait to plant cauliflower and broccoli until nighttime air temperatures are consistently at or above 50°F. In the berry patch, remove dead canes from brambles before they interfere with new growth. If you have wrapped fig trees examine them for new the appearance of new growth.

Trees and Shrubs: Continue to plant deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Take some time to enjoy the beautiful flowering trees all around now and in the coming weeks: early flowering cherry and plum, service berry, flowering quince, magnolia, crabapple, dogwood, lingering andromeda, forsythia, and more.

Lawns: Continue to overseed thin or bare patches. Keep your lawn cut to a height of 3 to 4 inches, removing no more than one third of the grass blades in the process. Steer clear of newly seeded patches that could be damaged or ripped up by equipment.

Houseplants: Inspect plants often for pests and manage any present as soon as possible. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

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April 26 to May 2

Perennials: Lavender has become increasingly popular with the advent of hardier varieties, though it still may be relatively short lived in the Hudson Valley. These plants require full sun and well-drained soil, and even with optimal conditions, they may eventually become straggly. To promote fullness, lavender may be cut back to approximately 6 inches above the lowest new growth. If the plants don't recover well or continue to look thin, consider replacing older plants with new, or choosing a different species that is better adapted to the site.

Flowers: Continue to sow seeds of hardy annuals (alyssum, dusty miller, marigold, etc.) outdoors. Plant seedlings of these hardy annuals now.

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue to plant and transplant cool-season vegetables, again waiting to plant cauliflower and broccoli until nighttime temperatures are consistently at or above 50°F. Container vegetables can be convenient and practical, arranged in a pleasing way, and grown on a deck or patio with at least six

hours of sun. Choose compact varieties. Make sure to use a potting mix (not topsoil) in a good size pot, preferably with a water reservoir.

Trees and Shrubs: Prune early flowering shrubs that have finished blooming, as well as late-flowering shrubs such as butterfly bush, hydrangea and Rose of Sharon. Remove a few of the oldest stems to encourage new growth and those that are very small or thin. Take no more than ¼ to ⅓ of the total growth in a given season.

Lawns: At this time of year, the grass may be growing fast. The more it is mowed, the faster it may grow. To regulate grass growth and slow it down, consider mowing every two weeks. Leave clippings on the lawn unless they form clumps. If necessary pick up clumps, add them to a compost pile, mixing in carbon sources (shredded paper or leaves) as you go.

Houseplants: Continue to shape plants that have grown leggy.

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May 3 to May 9

Perennials: Continue to plant and install stakes for perennials that will become tall. Once asters, mums and other late blooming perennials are 6 inches tall or more, pinch them back to 4 inches to increase bushiness and fullness of bloom (this can delay flowering a bit). Stay out of the garden when the ground is wet or when it's raining.

Flowers: If you're buying plants for flower beds, choose compact, bushy seedlings that haven't yet flowered. It's on the early side to plant many warm season annuals. Keep an eye on the weather and bring tender plants indoors at night. In the meantime, get out planters that have been used for a few seasons or may have contained any diseased plant material, and thoroughly clean them. Refill with fresh potting mix.

Fruits and Vegetables: You can still plant carrots, chard, and successions of fast maturing early greens if these can be watered adequately as the weather warms. Check to see if brambles and grapes are properly attached to a trellis or arbor. Use soft ties to attach canes to the supports as needed.

Trees and Shrubs: Continue pruning spring-flowering shrubs (andromeda, azalea, rhododendron, etc.) after they've bloomed. Remove a few of the oldest stems to encourage new growth and those that are very small or thin. Take no more than ¼ to ⅓ of the total growth in a given season.

Lawns: If indicated by a soil test, consider fertilizing around Memorial Day with a slow release fertilizer. A low-maintenance lawn may not need fertilizer more than once per year, if at all, since nutrient cycling may be adequate in well-established turf. Cornell experts advise that fertilizing around Labor Day is preferable to earlier applications for a home lawn. Higher maintenance lawns may be fertilized around Memorial Day and Labor Day if needed.

Houseplants: During especially mild spring days, it might be tempting to stick houseplants outdoors in the sun all day. Don't. They need gradual exposure to the great outdoors, even if you're eventually going to keep them outside this summer. Find a partially shady spot outdoors, leave them there for a few hours, and bring them back inside. Gradually expose them to more time outdoors until they are used to outdoor conditions around Memorial Day or early June.

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