



APRIL GARDENING TIPS

FROM A BCRP HORTICULTURALIST!

General Garden Maintenance for April

- Now is the time to divide ornamental grasses. Most can be divided into 3-5 pieces (or more) to replant elsewhere in the garden.
- To divide large grasses, remove the clump from the ground. Insert two spades or garden forks back to back in the center of the clump and pry apart. If the clump is too large to remove completely, remove sections all the way around the clump, leaving about 1/3 intact, in place.
- Smaller grasses can be removed and divided with a garden spade or a hatchet. Grasses are hardy; they will recover quickly from rough handling during division.
- Tough perennials like Shasta daisies, black-eyed susans, asters, and yarrow can be divided now as well. Fall flowering mums should be divided in April as well.
- Spring flowering bulbs can be divided or moved after flowering but before the foliage dies back. Leave the foliage intact when re-planting.
- Foliage from spring flowering bulbs should be left on the bulbs at least 6 weeks after flowering. It does not have to be completely brown before removing but should have started to yellow.
- Water all perennials, grasses and bulbs that have been recently moved or planted. Continue to water these as needed throughout the spring until they are well established.
- Weed control is essential at this time. Remove any visible weeds and mulch the perennial garden 2-4 inches. Carefully mulch around perennials (not over them) as many perennials can be suffocated by covering up the crown of the plant. To make mulching easier, place empty pots or buckets over each perennial clump, add mulch, then remove the pots to expose the perennial clumps.
- Mulch young trees to protect from mower damage. A 24" to 36" ring of mulch 2" deep should provide weed control and keep power equipment away from tender young bark. Recent research shows that deeper mulch reduces oxygen exchange with the soil, slowing root growth in young trees. Take care that the mulch is not piled up against the bark; think of it as a doughnut of mulch. Mulch piled against the bark can cause a number of problems, including insect problems.

Pruning Jobs for April

- Prune any remaining spring flowering shrubs – AFTER they are finished flowering. Forsythia branches should be cut all the way back to the ground, leaving no stump. New growth will come up from the roots.
- Early in April, cut Butterfly Bush back to 12 to 18 inches. There should be green shoots visible below the cuts.
- Prune azaleas after flowering. Use care and remove only branches that are crossing or damaged. To maintain the size of the azalea, remove 2-3 inches of the branches that have just finished blooming. Selectively prune one branch at a time; do not shear azaleas.
- Pinch new 'candles' on evergreens to encourage bushy, dense growth.

Planting in April

- Plant perennials now, including perennial vines. Select plants that are suited the environment where they will be planted. Consider the amount of sun and shade, the amount of available moisture, and the size of the mature plant.
- Continue to plant deciduous trees and shrubs throughout the month.
- Hardy annuals, like petunias and dusty miller can be planted. More tender annuals should be planted near the end of the month. There is still a chance of frost in April in Baltimore, so watch those hanging baskets and containers early in the month.
- Early vegetables can be planted including onions, scallions, Swiss chard, peas, broccoli, carrots and potatoes. Plant lettuce every two weeks for a continuous supply through the early summer.