

## pril Success Tips

**1. It's Spring Planting Time!** Plant more flowers and edibles this year—create a more beautiful and productive yard!

**2. Try our new Health Kick Tomatoes** which are high in lycopene, and higher in antioxidants than other tomatoes! Plus we have a wide selection of **heirloom tomatoes!**



**3. Fertilize your plants**—the heavy rains in March have leached out some nutrients. Include plants in pots, both indoors and outdoors, and start them on a regular fertilizing schedule to maximize results.

## Color Strategies

Use one or more of these five design tips to create more beautiful plantings with annual and perennial flowers.

✿ **Brighten shady areas:** Darker colors tend to get lost in part shade unless you use lighter colors, such as coral, pink, white and light blue, either behind or around them. Try *impatiens*, *foxgloves*, *lobelia*, *vinca minor*, *campanula*, and *alyssum*.

✿ **Plant for contrast.** If your flower bed is in front of a dark-stained fence or house, plant pale flowers (light yellow *daylilies* and *petunias*, pink *cosmos*, and white *daisies*). Use darker, stronger colors (orange *marigolds*, and mixed colors of *gerbera daisies*, *celosia*, *mimulus*, *phlox*, and *zinnias*) in front of a light colored house.



✿ **Use theme colors.** Variations of the same color will unify your garden. If blue is your theme, use as many shades of blue as you can find, from deep royal *petunias*, *lobelia* and *salvia* to pastel *ageratum*. Include some in purple and *lavender*, too.

✿ **Create a focal point with color.** Instead of long, uninterrupted rows of flowers, create a focal point by planting a mass of one color in the center, such as red *salvia*, then surround it with flowers in contrasting colors and height, such as dark blue *lobelia* and white *bacopa*.

✿ **Use colorful foliage too.** Try multi-colored coleus, variegated *hostas*, whitish *lamium* (has small pink flowers), *lamb's ear*, and reddish *grasses*.



## Tasty & Colorful Edible Borders

In addition to their visual appeal, an edible border can also contribute to the dinner table!

**For color**, red stemmed *Swiss chard* can be interspersed with orange or yellow *nasturtiums*, *marigolds*, *calendulas*, or *scented geraniums*. 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard has veins of pink, red, and yellow and pairs well with blue borage, or pink and blue bachelor's button. *Rhubarb*, with its glossy green leaves, is available in a variety of stem colors. *Lavender*, with their flowering spikes and gray foliage, can be quite dramatic. *Blueberries* have attractive leaves, beautiful flowers, and delicious berries—it's hard to beat this combination. Also add some *citrus trees* as an interesting focal point.

**Low-growing vines and creeping plants** such as *thyme*, *rosemary*, *strawberries*, and even *squash* will fill in gaps. Visually they'll unify your design through repetition.

For those **bare spots** that will unexpectedly appear, consider filling in with versatile and easy to plant herbs like *parsley*, *basil*, *sage*, *oregano*, *mints*, and *cilantro*. Add more color by planting flowers you can eat, including *pansies* and *nasturtiums*.

These are just a few suggestions to get your taste buds and your artistic juices running—have fun!

## Easy, Efficient, & Excellent Vegetables

If you want to grow the most food possible from a small area, University tests show that you should plant *beets*, *carrots*, *summer squash*, *cucumbers*, *onion sets*, and *tomatoes*.

Looking for cost-efficient vegetables to grow? Research shows that when you combine the total time it takes to plant, water, stake, feed, protect, and harvest vegetables, you get more pounds of food for less effort when you plant *cucumbers*, *squash*, *tomatoes*, *cabbage*, *carrots*, *beets*, and *onion sets*. *Beets* and *tomatoes* hold the distinctive honor for the highest yield per amount of land used.

The fastest growing vegetables are *radishes*—they are ready to eat in less than 30 days after seeding.



## April Plant Protection Guide

◆ **Young seedlings and recent transplants**, are tender treats for *snails*, *slugs*, *earwigs*, *sowbugs*, and *cutworms*. Protect them with *Sluggo Plus*, an excellent bait that controls all of these pests.

◆ If you see small bumps on the leaves, younger shoots, or even the fruit, your **citrus** has *scale insects*. Yellowing leaves with a 'stippling' or 'flecked' pattern are caused by *mites* or *leafhoppers*, and young curling leaves indicate *aphids*. Ask us for controls for these.

◆ Release our **ladybugs** (arriving in early April) to help control some pests naturally. We also have excellent organic sprays for most pest problems—ask us for help.

◆ Don't know what is **causing plant damage**? Check your plants daily—occasionally with a flashlight at night—and you'll eventually catch the culprits in action.

## Gardening with Children

Parents and Grandparents can impart a wonderful legacy by making gardening memories together with their young ones. Each age is a special time to learn and experience the garden in different ways when temperament, gender, and individual development are taken into consideration. Here are broad guidelines to consider.



**Preschoolers, Ages 3-4.** It's all about taking your preschooler into the garden to explore and have fun together. Pull a few weeds, pick some flowers, dig in the dirt, and help satisfy their curiosity through your insights.

**Ages 5-11.** For the next half-dozen years or so, gardens can provide a place of learning to play with others. Adults can assist where needed in the construction of forts, trees houses, secret hide-aways, and children's gardens—as long as they take into account the child's level of dexterity, attention span, personal interests and preferences.

**Kindergartners, Age 5.** Remember the "doing" is actually more important than the end result at this age, so who really cares if rows are not straight, or a seedling is pulled up to look at the roots? Gardens are a place for interacting and learning.

**Elementary, Ages 6-7.** Most little ones at this age are fascinated by soil, holes, water, and don't forget the BUGS. They can now participate in planning their garden by reading seed packets, making plant markers, buying plants, planting, watering, and harvesting. Their focus remains on the doing, not the end result, so set expectations accordingly.

**Middle Schoolers, Ages 8-9.** As their ability to use tools increases, children can build arbors and fences. Joining a 4-H or other community club will build friendships while providing positive activities. Children can also handle more complex thoughts as they design their own gardens on paper and then translate their design into a real garden.

**Middle Schoolers, Ages 10-11.** Opportunities for fun in the garden are endless as gardening can now combine the disciplines of science, math, and art. How about reaching out by planting a community garden? Parents and children can let their imagination help create even more fun in the garden.

**In-Betweeners, Age 12.** Focus their interest through independent studies. For example, an "8th grade challenge" can help the pre-teen demonstrate mastery of a subject and may even lead to a career in botany, horticulture, community planning, entomology, environmental science, or development of sustainable food resources!

Next month: *Inspiring a lifelong love of gardening with children.*



## Celebrate National Garden Month!

April is the time to celebrate National Garden Month! Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- ★ Implement new techniques like organic gardening, water saving, or starting a worm composting bin.
- ★ Start an ongoing gardening calendar, perhaps as a simple word document on your computer, recording best pruning times for various plants, fertilizer dates, planting dates, blooming times etc.
- ★ Build community spirit by organizing, or participating in, a spring-cleaning green-up day on your street or in your area.
- ★ Become an informed gardener through classes, learning basic botanical Latin, or joining a Master Gardener's program.
- ★ Plant a specialty or theme garden.
- ★ Plant more fruits and vegetables!
- ★ Check out "101 Ways to Celebrate National Garden Month" and "10 Ways to be Green this National Garden Month" at [www.nationalgardenmonth.com](http://www.nationalgardenmonth.com).



*Come celebrate with us!*

## Sweet Early Melons

Melons are sweetest when they ripen in hot weather. Here's how you can enjoy eating large and sweet melons earlier in the season:



- ★ Plant seedlings as soon as the ground is warm enough.
- ★ When fruit is set, pinch off all extra fuzzy growing vine tips.
- ★ Raise baseball-sized melons off of the ground and into the warmth of the full sun by placing them on top of upturned metal cans that you have partially buried in the soil (burying an inch or two anchors the cans). Cans help make the melons sweeter by transferring absorbed heat

from the sun, keeping them off the cool soil, and out from under the shade of foliage.

## 'Lasagna' Gardening

Instead of tilling and digging your spring garden beds, consider layering prime materials 2-feet deep on top of your soil to plant in!

'Lasagna Gardening' is comprised of layering green and brown materials interspersed with topsoil, finished compost, or peat. When you are ready to plant, your high-organic material will have 'cooked down' into a rich, fluffy soil that is easy to work with. Plus there will be fewer weeds and better water retention!

- 1 Start with a layer of 'browns' such as peat, pine needles, or shredded newspaper and junk mail (in the fall, leaves are an excellent addition). In general, you want your 'brown' layers to be about twice as deep as your 'green' layers.
- 2 Layer 'greens' such as fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, garden trimmings, spent blooms, and grass clippings.
- 3 Add a layer of topsoil, peat, or finished compost.

Keep repeating steps 1-3 until your 'lasagna' gets close to 2-feet high, then top off the entire bed with 3 inches of finished compost or topsoil. *Planting is easy once you decide what you want to grow in your no-till garden bed!*

As the layers decompose, the bed will settle. You can then plant right in top of it. If you don't use your 'lasagna' right away to grow plants, you can always continue to build upon it to make wonderful compost!

