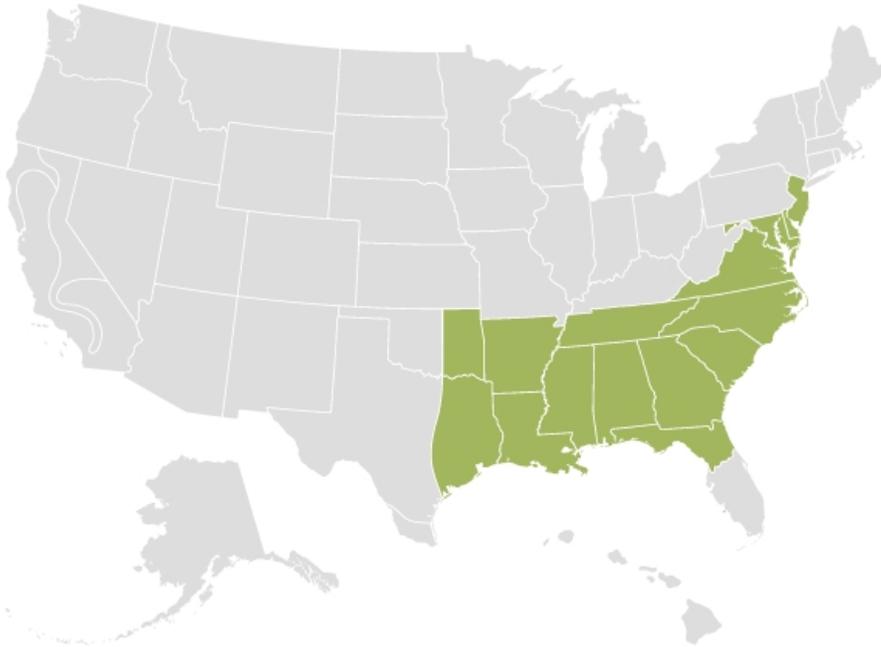


Gardening Tips for April

Southeast and Mid-Atlantic Gardens



States in the region:

Maryland, Delaware, DC, New Jersey, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina

Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, Texas (Eastern)

Oklahoma (Eastern), Arkansas and Tennessee

Key Issues for April

- **Plant summer-flowering bulbs** after your area's last-frost date. Here are a few that can bring great interest to summer planting beds and containers:
 - **Cannas** offer bold foliage and showy, lily-like flowers in shades of red, rose, pink, salmon, orange and yellow.
 - **Calla lilies** are popular cutflowers that come in white, yellow, pink, red, orange or purple, depending on the species.
 - **Dahlia** blooms range in size from 2-10 inches and come in a variety of colors and forms, depending on the type.
 - **Tuberous begonias** have glossy leaves and big, camellia-like blossoms. The flowers come in all colors except blue.

- **Conserve water!** Use rain barrels or other rain-collecting methods so you can reuse what nature's provided to keep your plants watered, as well as healthy, throughout the season.
- Grow a garden with the young sprouts in your life! **Growums** teaches children and adults alike how fun and easy it is to grow a garden of their own – and encourages kids to eat healthy foods! Six fun garden kits are available: **Pizza, Taco, Ratatouille, Salad, Herb** and **Stir-Fry**.
- Clean your lawn, landscape and garden beds of any remaining debris and branch damage due to winter storms. Starting your outdoor spring-cleaning now will help you **save time in the garden** later this season. Note: Serious tree work should be done by a licensed arborist.
- **Fertilize blooming shrubs** that flower in spring and summer. Azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods and camellias will benefit from a good application. Always carefully read and follow package directions for the proper application rate.
- Keep the pruning shears away from spring-flowering shrubs like rhododendrons, azaleas and lilacs. If you **prune** now, you'll remove the flowers buds. Wait to prune until *after* they've finish blooming, then prune immediately.
- Maintain your turf and practice good **spring lawn care**. Mow using sharp blades, keep weeds under control, and water appropriately when April showers aren't enough.
- Keep an eye out for **pests and diseases on trees and shrubs**. Be especially on the lookout for azalea lace bug on azaleas. Look on the undersides of leaves for evidence of this small sucking insect. Organic sprays and biological controls are available. As always, read and follow all label directions carefully. Not sure what's bugging your plants? Your local **Cooperative Extension** office can help identify garden pests, as well as offer recommended controls for your area and situation.
- Grow an **Easter lily**. If you plant your potted houseplant in the garden after it's bloomed, you won't see any more flowers this year, but you'll be rewarded next summer!
- **Grow a bowl of salad greens**. Sow seeds or plant transplants of leaf and head lettuce in containers (or in the garden). If you stagger your planting dates, you'll continue to enjoy fresh lettuce until the hot weather arrives.
- Use a pre-emergent herbicide (weed killer) to **control grassy weeds**, like crabgrass, in the lawn. The time to apply is a bit later this year, so the month of April is good. Note, however, that not all herbicides are the same! Always carefully read and follow all label directions for a safe and appropriate application rate for your weedy situation.
- Stay on top of your garden maintenance tasks. Get rid of weeds the second they're noticed in the garden. You can **help prevent weeds** from popping up during the growing season by applying mulch to clean beds.

- Let the foliage of your spring-flowering bulbs fully ripen before removing them. Allowing the leaves to naturally yellow and wither helps your bulbs store needed energy for next year's flowers. Unattractive yellowing foliage can be tucked around other emerging perennials, or **plant annuals** in the flower bed (after your area's last-frost date) to keep your garden looking neat and pretty.
- Clean up the patio furniture and your outdoor accessories, and **prepare containers for planting** so you'll be ready to grow – and enjoy – your garden this spring!
- Treat exterior foundations for **termites** and any other unwanted pests that become active and troublesome as the ground warms. Make sure you accurately identify all crawly culprits before performing any treatments.
- **Apply mulch** to landscape beds and borders. Mulch helps conserve soil moisture and eliminate weeds, as well as provides a “finished look” to your property. A 2-inch layer is all you need. Keep mulch several inches away from the crowns of plants.
- **Clean garden tools** if you didn't do it at the end of the past growing season.
- **Prune roses** once the leaf bud eyes start to form to ready your plants for new growth. Remember to seal the ends of the canes with white glue (but not school glue, because it'll wash off). The sealing protects the freshly cut canes from cane borers.
- Prepare your houseplants for an outdoor retreat: **Repot plants** that are container-bound, and when all danger of frost has passed in your area, send them outside to the deck, patio or balcony.