

Horticulture Tips

April 2012

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

Garden Tips for April

David Hillock

Fruit and Nut

- Don't spray insecticides during fruit tree bloom or pollination may be affected. Disease sprays can continue according to schedule and label directions. ([EPP-7319](#))
- Control cedar-apple rust. When the orange jelly galls are visible on juniper (cedar), following a rain, begin treating apple and crabapple trees with a fungicide. ([EPP-7319](#), [EPP-7611](#))
- Fire blight bacterial disease can be controlled at this time. Plant disease-resistant varieties to avoid diseases.
- Continue spray schedules for disease prone fruit and pine trees.

Tree and Shrub

- Proper watering of newly planted trees and shrubs often means the difference between success and replacement.
- Remove any winter-damaged branches or plants that have not begun to grow. Prune spring flowering plants as soon as they are finished blooming. ([HLA-6404](#), [HLA-6409](#))
- Control of powdery mildew disease can be done with early detection and regular treatment. Many new plant cultivars are resistant. ([EPP-7617](#))
- Leaf spot diseases can cause premature death of foliage and reduce plant vigor.

Flowers

- Most bedding plants, summer flowering bulbs, and annual flower seeds can be planted after danger of frost. This happens around mid-April in most of Oklahoma. Hold off mulching these crops until spring rains subside and soil temperatures warm up. Warm-season annuals should not be planted until soil temperatures are in the low 60s.
- Harden off transplants outside in partial protection from sun and wind prior to planting.
- Let spring flowering bulb foliage remain as long as possible before removing it.

Vegetables

- Wait a little longer for it to warm up before planting cucurbit crops and okra.
- Plant vegetable crops in successive plantings to ensure a steady supply of produce rather than harvesting all at once.
- Cover cucurbit crops with a floating row cover to keep out insect pests. Remove during bloom time.

- Watch for cutworm damage and add flea beetle scouting to your list of activities in the vegetable garden.

Landscape - General

- Hummingbirds arrive in Oklahoma in early April. Get your bird feeders ready using 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Do not use red food coloring.
- Keep the bird feeder filled during the summer and help control insects at the same time.
- Lace bugs, aphids, spider mites, bagworms, etc. can start popping up in the landscape and garden later this month. Keep a close eye on all plants and use mechanical, cultural, and biological control options first.
- Be alert for both insect pests and predators. Some pests can be hand picked without using a pesticide. Do not spray if predators such as lady beetles are present. Spray only when there are too few predators to be effective.
- Schedule a group tour of The Botanic Garden at OSU in Stillwater between the first of May and late October!

Lawn

- Warm-season grass lawns can be established beginning late April from sprigs, plugs or sod. ([HLA-6419](#))
- Fertilizer programs can begin for warm-season grasses in April. The following recommendations are to achieve optimum performance and appearance of commonly grown species in Oklahoma.
 - Zoysiagrass: 3 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - Bahiagrass: 3 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - Buffalograss: 2 - 3 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - Buffalograss/grama mixes: 3 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - Bermudagrass: 4-6 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - Centipedegrass: 2 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.
 - St. Augustinegrass: 3-6 lbs N/1,000 sq. ft.

When using quick release forms of fertilizer, use one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per application; water in nitrate fertilizers. ([HLA-6420](#))

- Mowing of warm-season lawns can begin now ([HLA-6420](#)). Cutting height for bermudagrass and zoysiagrass should be 1 to 1½ inches high, and buffalograss 1½ to 3 inches high.
- Damage from Spring Dead Spot Disease (SDS) becomes visible in bermudagrass ([EPP-7665](#)). Perform practices that promote grass recovery. Do not spray fungicides at this time for SDS control.
- Grub damage can be visible in lawns at this time. Check for the presence of grubs before ever applying any insecticide treatments. Apply appropriate soil insecticide if white grubs are a problem ([EPP-7306](#)). Water product into soil.

Garden Planting Guide for Warm-Season Vegetables

<u>Vegetable</u>	<u>Time to Plant*</u>	<u>Days to Harvest</u>	<u>Method of Planting</u>
Bean, Lima	April 15-30	90-120	Seed
Beans, Green or Wax	April 10-30	50-60	Seed
Beans, Pole	April 10-30	60-90	Seed
Cantaloupe	May 1-20	80-100	Seed or Plants
Cucumber	April 10-30 or later	50-70	Seed or Plants
Eggplant	April 10-30	80-90	Plants
Okra	April 10-30 or later	60-70	Seed
Pepper	April 10-30 or later	90-110	Plants
Pumpkin	April 10-30	90-120	Seed
Southern Pea	May 1-June 10	85-100	Seed
Squash, Summer	April 10-30 or later	40-60	Seed or Plants
Squash, Winter	May 15-June 15	110-125	Seed or Plants
Sweet Corn	Mar. 25-April 30	80-100	Seed
Sweet Potato	May 1-June 10	100-120	Plants
Tomato	April 10-30	70-90	Plants
Watermelon	May 1-20	90-120	Seed

*These dates indicate planting times from southeast to northwest Oklahoma. Specific climate and weather may influence planting dates. For cool-season vegetables, the soil temperature at the depth where the seeds are planted should be at least 40°F.

Asparagus Planting

Laura Payne

Asparagus is planted March through April after the soil has warmed up to about 50 degrees F. There is no advantage to planting the Asparagus crowns in cold, wet soils since it will not grow until the soil warms up. Asparagus plants thrive in full sun and prefer a light, well-drained soil.

Don't plan to harvest any spears the first year. Allow the plants to grow lush foliage, which you can cut back in the fall after turning brown. You can harvest lightly the second year, choosing two or three of the heavier spears per plant. Each season we will allow the wispy spears to grow into ferns and provide that ornamental character to our gardens. In the third year, you can harvest all you want from your asparagus bed.

Vegetable Garden Planting

Laura Payne

As the threat of frost passes we can begin planting our heat-loving crops like green beans and corn in the garden. If you want to grow your runner beans up your corn stalks, start your corn now, but wait

until it reaches a height of 2 feet before seeding your beans. You can also transplant squash and cucumbers into the garden. If you choose to plant seed instead of transplants, make a small hill and place 3 seeds per hill, when the seeds begin to grow, thin the plants back to the strongest seedling.

April Showers Bring ...Potential for Runoff

Courtney Sidwell and Justin Quetone Moss

As I currently sit here listening to the steady rain that has been coming down since 5 a.m., I think to myself how unusually warm and green this spring has begun to be. Will we need to water our lawns regularly, setting the automatic timer for the irrigation system, or will we need to wait until summer? At this rate of rainfall this season, I'd thankfully say the latter to be true. This also means grass will be growing abundantly and need to be cut more often, herbicides will need to be used to eradicate those pesky weeds that have sprung up everywhere, and diseases caused by moisture will call for fungicides. This is also the time of year to start applying fertilizer to the lawn. However, one of the goals we always want to promote in home lawn care is to minimize runoff of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and fungicides. So how do we accomplish this goal when there is so much rain coming down this season?

Tips to avoid runoff:

1. Do not apply fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides when heavy rain is in the forecast. Refer to [Mesonet](#) for Oklahoma weather forecast, conditions, and amount of rainfall that occurred.
2. If the chemical needs to be watered in, do not apply the chemical to the lawn immediately before or after a heavy rain has occurred. The soil needs time to soak in the excess rain that just occurred, so added water from the irrigation system will cause runoff of the chemical.
3. Make sure only the needed amount of nutrients is added to the soil, which can be determined by getting the soil tested. ([L-346](#))
4. Carefully follow instructions on chemical labels and dispose of it properly. ([L-317](#))
5. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide natural fertilizer to the lawn. This will reduce the need for chemical fertilizer. If the clippings should end up on the sidewalk or any paved area, make sure to collect them and spread them back on the lawn. ([E-1003](#))
6. Choose chemicals with the lowest potential to contaminate. For example, controlled-release fertilizers are better than soluble fertilizers in some cases. Another example is using pesticides such as horticultural oils and soaps that are less harmful. ([E-951](#))
7. Plant buffer zones will prevent runoff. Plants such as large ornamental grasses can be planted in a line between the street and lawn area to catch the excess water coming off the lawn.
8. Create and build a berm along the edge of the lawn and the street to slow down runoff and catch the excess water.
9. As was mentioned in the March tips, aerate the lawn if you haven't done so. This will increase water percolation and decrease runoff potential of the soil.

Using a Simple Drip System to Water Container Plantings

David Hillock

Growing plants in containers is fun, easy, and quite rewarding. They are especially valuable if you live in a place with little to no ground space to grow plants. However, keeping them properly watered throughout the summer can be a bit of a challenge. During the hottest parts of the summer they often dry out before you get home from work. When you go on vacation, you have to find someone to water them for you.

A simple solution to this dilemma is using an inexpensive drip irrigation system and automatic control valve. These irrigation systems can be bought at many home improvement stores, garden centers and nurseries.

Kits are available by some manufacturers that include everything needed to install a drip system to your outdoor faucet. I found a kit at our local home improvement store that included a backflow prevention device, which is necessary to keep contaminants from flowing back into the house when sudden low pressure occurs; an adapter to reduce down to the 1/4" tubing; 30' of 1/4" tubing; 8 stakes with emitters that are adjustable from 10 gph (gallons per hour) to 0 gph; t-connectors; and fasteners to secure the tubing to a wooden deck or structure. I also purchased an automatic control valve that is programmable, allowing you to set the water to come on and off as needed and run as long as needed. It runs on a battery and should last the whole growing season. I also purchased a simple Y valve to hook up to the faucet so I can attach the controller with the drip system and a garden hose to use for other purposes.

The starter kit described above is for containers, but many retail sources offer kits for the landscape as well as the individual components needed to customize the system to meet your plants needs. Total cost for our materials was around \$70.00 and the only tool I needed to install the system was a pair of scissors to cut the tubing to the proper lengths.

Now I can set the system to come on and off while I am away on vacation and I won't have to worry about whether or not my containers get watered. It's easy, inexpensive, and efficient. In the long-run you will save money, time, and your plants will be happy.

Seven Steps to Landscaping Your Yard for Wildlife

David Hillock

1. Set your objectives and priorities. Decide which types of birds or other animals you may feasibly attract given the habitat surrounding your yard and already in place (for example, whether the area is open, forested, etc.). Organize your landscape design accordingly, using plants that you know will work best for you.
2. Draw a map of your property. A map will help determine how much available space you have and other features about your yard. A map can help you experiment with different designs, keeping in mind those areas that are shady, sunny, wet, dry, or scenic.
3. Review the basic needs of birds (food, water, shelter, cover) and determine those components already present in your yard and those that may be lacking. Check the tables for listings of plants to determine which plants are appropriate for your area that you may want or need to obtain. Realize

that while your yard and garden may not provide all of the necessary components, your neighbor's yards may contain some of these. Emphasize native plants!

4. Check with natural resource professionals and various reference books at your library or bookstore for practical tips.
5. Develop a planting plan. It is important to draw shrubbery and trees at full or mature size to plan for space needs. Determine how much money you are willing to spend. Realize that you do not have to plant it all in one season. Use native plants where possible.
6. Implement your plan. Shop local nurseries and garden centers as well as catalogues of plant and seed suppliers to determine the availability of plant materials. Keep records of your expenses and take pictures as your plan develops.
7. Maintain your plan. This involves watering, fertilizing, pruning, weeding, and mowing. Remember, native plants will be more forgiving of lack of care and will require less maintenance than many exotics. Maintaining nest boxes and feeders on a regular basis is also necessary.

Camp TURF

Shelley Mitchell

Camp TURF (Tomorrow's Undergraduates Realizing the Future) will be in its third summer in 2012. This year's academy runs from Sunday, June 17 through Friday, June 29. Any Oklahoma high school students currently in 8th or 9th grade (who will be entering 9th and 10th grade in the fall of 2012) are eligible. Camp TURF is hosted by the OSU Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, and students spend two weeks exploring different career fields while participating in hands-on activities with professors and professionals in the field. In the evenings we have recreational and cultural activities, such as boating, live theater, bowling, etc. The camp is free for students, as it is sponsored by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. We have 25 openings, and selection starts April 1. Applications are available for download on the department website, at www.hortla.okstate.edu. We hope to get a large pool of applicants from around the state!

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Family Day in the Garden

April 21, 2012 – 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

The Botanic Garden at OSU (TBG), Stillwater, OK

Free to the public. Open to any gardening enthusiast, couple or family who would enjoy spending time together outdoors in the gardens, performing simple gardening tasks with TBG's help and getting back in touch with nature.

IPM Conference

May 16, 2012 – Stillwater, OK

Plant Materials Conference

August 28, 2012

Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

Tree Care Conference

October 3, 2012

Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

GardenFest

October 6, 2012

The Botanic Garden at OSU – Stillwater, OK

Global Horticulture Conference

November 7, 2012

Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu.