

Garden Club Horticultural Hints April 2022 Back to the garden!



A covering of leaves and pine needles protected this garden's extensive perennial beds. Underneath are penstemon, liatris, coreopsis, and achillea. Uncovering these plants in early April ensures they will have the sun, moisture, and air to grow and bloom for 2022.

There are also things you *don't* want to do! Hold off on mulching flower beds until the soil has warmed to at least 55 degrees – likely in mid-May in New England. You may begin mulching around, but never up against, trees and shrubs to prevent mower or trimmer damage to the bark



Start the month by removing old mulch, leaves, and evergreen branches from your perennial beds — but stay out of the beds so you don't compact the soil.

Next, wake up your lawn by raking with a metal spring rake to remove dead grass and winter debris. Overseed thin or bare areas, and add compost to enrich your soil without the need for chemicals.



Consider adding clover to your lawn — it creates a green lawn, doesn't need fertilizer — it creates its own by fixing nitrogen from the air into the soil. Along with not bagging clippings, you will green up your property and save money



Keep the size of evergreens in check by removing the new growth, called 'candles' from ornamental shrubs. Left unchecked, evergreens can outgrow their allotted space and become leggy. Candling evergreens results in denser plants

Enjoy the show from your spring bulbs. Then, photograph and make notes on where to place other bulbs you would like to add to your garden for future years



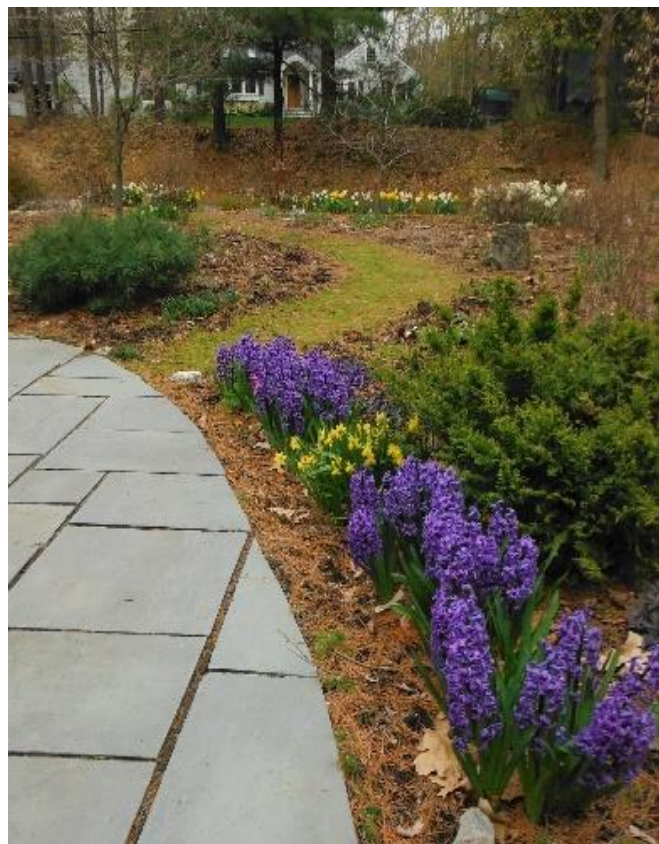
Photo credit: University of Maryland Extension Service

Because the ground is soft, **April is a great time to pull out invasive plants** such as Japanese barberry (shown above), Japanese honeysuckle and burning bush. Replace these with American natives such as itea (a spring bloomer with fabulous fall color that last longer than burning bush), cornus canadensis (bunchberry -- a flowering ground cover with fall berries) and native honeysuckle (Ionicera sempervirens).



Photo credit: Flower Patch Farm

Beardless (Japanese or Siberian) irises need to be divided regularly. As they grow, the center of the plant weakens or dies. Dig out the clump, cut out 4-to 6-inch segments from the outer ring and discard the center. Plant your renewed irises in soil that has been improved with compost or other organic matter, making certain to keep them at the same depth as they were before.



By mid-April — if the soil has dried out sufficiently — **you can plant peas, spinach, lettuce, onions, beets and potatoes.** (A clump in your hand should fall apart after being squeezed.) Indoors, start your tomato seedlings at the beginning of the month, cucumber and squash late in April. But don't put them out until the nighttime, not just the day time, temperatures are above 50 degrees.

Written and created by Betty Sanders. For more horticultural suggestions for April and throughout the year, please visit www.BettyOnGardening.com