

Spring Is Almost Here: 5 Gardening Rules to Ensure Your Garden is Ready



As winter recedes and the first signs of spring start to appear, gardeners everywhere feel a renewed sense of excitement and anticipation. Preparing your garden for the new season is not just a ritual; it's a promise of growth, renewal, and the beauty that lies ahead. To ensure your garden thrives, follow these five essential gardening rules tailored to the unique demands of the early spring season.

1. Start with a Clean Slate: Clearing and Prepping Your Beds



Before you plant a single seed, it's crucial to clear your garden beds of last season's remnants. Remove dead foliage, weeds, and any debris that accumulated over the winter months. This not only tidies up your garden but also prevents the spread of diseases and pests that could have overwintered in the plant matter.

Once cleared, enrich your soil by incorporating compost or well-rotted manure. This will replenish nutrients lost over the previous growing season, ensuring your plants have the food they need to flourish. Additionally, consider testing your soil's pH to make sure it's optimal for the types of plants you intend to grow. Tailoring your soil to your garden's needs is a foundational step that sets the stage for a successful growing season.

2. Timing is Everything: Know When

to Plant



One of the most common gardening missteps is planting too early. While the first warm days may tempt you to start sowing, patience is vital. Keep an eye on local frost dates and wait until the danger of frost has passed before planting sensitive seedlings. Utilize weather apps or consult local gardening groups for the most accurate information tailored to your area.

For those eager to get started, focus on cool-season crops like peas, lettuce, and kale, which can tolerate lower temperatures. Starting these plants early can extend your growing season and lead to an earlier harvest. Remember, understanding the needs of each plant in terms of temperature and timing can be the difference between a thriving garden and a disappointing one.

3. Prune to Promote Health and Growth



Early spring is the ideal time for pruning many types of plants. Pruning not only helps to shape your plants but also encourages healthy growth and flowering. Focus on removing dead or diseased branches, as well as any that cross or rub against each other, which can lead to damage and disease.

However, be mindful of the flowering habits of your plants. For spring bloomers, it's best to wait until after they've flowered to prune, as they set their buds the previous year. Understanding the specific needs of each plant in your garden will ensure you're pruning in a way that promotes optimal health and beauty.

4. Don't Forget Mulch: Protect and Nourish Your Soil



Applying a fresh layer of mulch in your garden beds not only improves the appearance of your garden but also provides numerous benefits to your plants. Mulch helps retain soil moisture, suppresses weeds, and keeps soil temperatures consistent, creating a more hospitable environment for plant roots.

When mulching, be sure to leave a small gap around the base of plants to prevent moisture buildup, which can lead to rot. Opt for organic mulches like shredded bark or straw, which will break down over time and add nutrients to your soil. Remember, a well-mulched garden is a healthier and more resilient garden.

5. Water Correctly: Establishing Strong Roots



Proper watering is crucial, especially as new plants are getting established. Overwatering can be just as harmful as under-watering, leading to root rot and other issues. Ensure your garden has adequate drainage and water plants at the root level to encourage deep root growth.

If you have the means, consider installing a drip irrigation system or soaker hoses for more efficient watering. These systems deliver water to the base of the plant directly, minimizing waste and reducing the risk of foliar diseases. Additionally, watering in the early morning allows plants to fully absorb moisture before the heat of the day, reducing evaporation and ensuring your plants stay hydrated.

Gardening Rules Ensure You're Ready for Spring!



Preparing your garden for spring is an act of optimism and foresight. By following these essential gardening rules, you set the stage for a season of growth, beauty, and bounty. Clear and prep your beds, time your plantings wisely, prune for health and growth, mulch to protect and nourish, and water with care. With these practices in place, your garden will not only be ready for spring but will thrive throughout the growing season. Happy gardening!

Victory Garden Planning during a Pandemic



We're in the thick of it now. Areas are going into lockdown, and non-essential businesses are closing until further notice. It feels weird. It's scary. I'm exhausted. But I feel motivated, now more than ever, to keep up my gardening efforts. I've seen interest in [gardening](#) skyrocket. Is this the return of the victory garden?

I know a lot of you are anxious to get started and make up for lost time. While it's a little late to start crops like onions, there's still plenty of time to prep before the last frost date passes you by.

Starting Seeds

Last year, I wrote a series of posts about seed starting. The posts covered a lot of ground, so I recommend checking out a few of those articles. Many of them go over the many mistakes

you can make during the process and provide tips for avoiding fatal errors. Here's a roundup of a few posts you should read:

[Seed starting Mistakes to Avoid](#)

[Is Starting from Seed Worth it?](#)

[The Importance of Air Circulation](#)

[Seed Germination](#)

[Watering Seedlings](#)

Now is a great time to consider starting your victory garden [plants from seed](#). Why? With many stores shutting their physical locations, you'll likely have a tough time finding starts. Don't hesitate to contact your local nursery, though. Many locations are offering delivery for all sorts of items.

What Should I Grow in my Victory Garden?

I get this question a lot. Whether you have a ton of space or a small balcony, the answer is two-fold:

Things you like to eat

If vegetable gardening is your goal, think about what pops up often on your dinner plate. Don't bother with things that are easy if they don't appeal to your palate.

I love greens and eat a lot of kale, arugula, and bok choy, so those are some of the crops that feature prominently in my garden.

Conversely, I don't love cucumbers that much and rarely sacrifice a lot of growing space to them. One plant is more than enough and, I usually only use them for pickling. Some years, I don't bother with cukes at all.

Things that are easy

Unless you're an avid gardener or don't mind dealing with finicky crops, stick to things that are easy to grow. Remember, though, easy is relative. Something that's easy to grow in one climate may be a pain to grow in another. Or perhaps it's tougher to produce a particular crop in your area because of a recurring pest issue. I don't bother with corn anymore, because squirrels always make off with the goods when I'm not looking.

Your best bet is to pick plants that meet somewhere in the middle. The best plants for your victory garden are those that provide a significant reward compared to the effort expended. For instance, I love love, love, eggplants. They're a bit tricky to grow in my climate, because they prefer hot weather and don't enjoy temperature swings (which are common here, especially at the start and end of the summer). Still, I love them so much I'm willing to deal with these delicate plants. On the plus side, I never have pest issues with my eggplants. The result? A plant that provides a big reward upon harvest (because I love eating eggplant!) but doesn't require an unreasonable amount of effort to grow.