

# April Gardening Guide 101



"Watching something grow is good for morale. It helps us believe in life." - Myron S. Kaufman

## Prune

- Fig trees can be pruned to get rid of any branches damaged during winter. Cut back long bare branches to 2 inches to encourage new growth
- Flowered shoots of hydrangeas and winter jasmine can now be pruned back
- Evergreen and deciduous shrubs can be pruned back to encourage new growth and ensure optimum health for the upcoming year
- Peaches and apricot fruitlets should be thinned out as the trees produce more than they can cope with. Thinning should start when fruitlets are the size of large peas
- Perennials and ornamental grasses should be cut back to make way for new growth
- Any daffodils and tulips which have finished flowering should now be deheaded

## Plant

- Container grown evergreens can be moved to the garden as they establish best in spring
- Peas, broad beans, root veg, salad and hardy herbs can all be sown from early April
- Chitted potatoes should now be ready to be planted outside
- Tomato seeds can be sown indoors. Once all risk of frost has passed, they can be planted outdoors

## Harvest

- Asparagus spears can be harvested now – this should be done before they reach 18cm
- Rhubarb can be harvested from early April. Pull the stems rather than cut to avoid the remaining stump from rotting
- Onions, kale, leeks and broccoli can all be harvested if ready
- Early sown salad can be harvested now. Cut off the leaves, leaving the plant, to encourage regrowth

## Miscellaneous

- Roses, fruit trees and shrubs should be mulched after a wet spell to help protect the soil from drying out during hot and dry spells
- Dig over bare soil with a fertiliser to de-weed and prepare for planting
- Strawberry plants will be coming out of dormancy. Ensure they are well watered and fed a high potassium fertiliser to encourage growth
- Clear out your greenhouse of any plant debris and disinfect and wash the benches and glass. Keep the greenhouse ventilated to prevent stale air
- Climbing roses and, honey suckle and clematis should be tied to their supports to train the plants and support new growth

## Gardener's Advice

### Use Vermiculite for germinating seeds

Vermiculite is a really useful ingredient to add to your soil in April for germinating seeds. It provides an extra layer of insulation which protects from extreme temperature fluctuations that can occur in spring. It also lets in light, retains moisture without waterlogging, and is sterile.

<http://www.hartley-botanic.co.uk/author/jeanvernon>  
**Jean Vernon**



### Use water filled bottles as thermal stores

We use a lot of recycled 2 litre plastic water filled bottles as thermal stores - both inside the greenhouse in any redundant spaces, and outside under fleece, or alongside early seed sowing lines. Water stores more heat than most alternatives, warming during the day, and then releasing the heat overnight, helping germination and growth.

[www.thegardenimpressionists.wordpress.com](http://www.thegardenimpressionists.wordpress.com)  
**Julian**



### Change the soil in your pots

When you're planting up your pots for the summer, do change the soil completely. It's tempting just to scrape the top bit off, then add some new compost. But the heucheras blew off my pots like Ascot hats in the wind last year. I hadn't changed the soil in the pot properly - giving vine weevil an excellent opportunity to tuck into the heuchera roots.

[www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk](http://www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk)  
**Alexandra**



### Don't plant climbers close together

DON'T ever plant climbers with different flowering times so close together that they grow into each other. Different flowering times mean different pruning times, so you will never be able to get into the tangle to prune without losing the flowers from the other climber. Having roses intertwined with honeysuckle and clematis may sound lovely, but it'll turn into massive choked-up mound.

[www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk](http://www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk)  
**Alexandra**



### Identify your weeds

A weed is just a plant that's growing out of place so when weeding, take a weed identification book out with you or download a phone app that will help you to figure out what the weeds growing in your garden are. Some weeds are edible and you could be throwing away an unusual salad option. Once you can identify a weed it's easier to know how to manage it and could be the difference between a garden full of weeds during the next growing season or not.

[www.greensideup.ie/dees-vegetable-blog](http://www.greensideup.ie/dees-vegetable-blog)  
**Dee**



### Sow perennial herbs for flavouring meals

April is a good month to sow perennial herb seeds like Rosemary, Oregano, Sage and Thyme. A pot of herbs growing by your kitchen door will mean you will just a couple of snips away from a bunch of fresh home-grown flavoursome leaves that will enhance mealtimes for years to come!

[www.sowseeds.co.uk](http://www.sowseeds.co.uk)  
**Debbie**



## Top 10 Tips for April

	Mow your grass at least every fortnight to prevent overgrowth. Cut back the length gradually – cut no more than 30% off the total height at any one time to avoid scalping the lawn. Sow lawn seed on any bare patches and apply a high nitrogen fertiliser and lawn weed killers to encourage a healthy summer lawn.
	Catch any early perennial weeds now before they flower and spread seeds. Dig over flower and vegetable beds to turn over any new growth. If digging over the beds aren't an option, pull up the weeds by hand to prevent it from spreading seed, or cover nearby plants with polythene and apply weedkiller.
	House plants will require more water as the warm weather and longer light will encourage faster growth. Keep the windows open whenever possible to allow fresh air to circulate.
	Save rain water in a water butt or bin by placing them under downpipes in your roof. This can be stored and used during dry spells, and will save you money compared to using drinking water.
	Empty out your greenhouse one afternoon and clear any debris, soil and dirt. Fully wash and disinfect the benches and glass, both inside and outside, to allow a sterile environment with plenty of light for any seedlings grown during spring and summer. Ventilate the greenhouse on warm, sunny days to prevent air from becoming stale.
	Fertilise and mulch flower beds, shrubs and trees after a period of rain. This will prevent the soil from drying out, and ensure it retains the nutrients needed to grow throughout the warmer months.
	Check fruit trees for infestations or diseases, and use an oil-based spray or wash on any showing signs of pests. Avoid unnecessary spraying on trees not showing infestation as it may kill beneficial insects.
	Slugs and snails will start to come out in force in April so put out traps to prevent infestation. Crushed up egg shells around plants will deter both slugs and snails without harming other wildlife. Encourage birds into the garden with full bird baths and seeds or fat balls. They will repay you by catching slugs and snails.
	Clean your patios from the build-up of winter grime to brighten up your garden ahead of spring. A pressure washer is a quick but expensive option, otherwise use hot soapy water and a stiff bristled broom to scrub off dirt. If your patio is suffering from algae, dilute thin bleach and apply to specific areas of algae. Leave for 10 minutes before rinsing off; be careful not to get any of this bleach solution near your plants!
	Citrus plants can start to be fed now in preparation for being placed outdoors in summer. Use a high nitrogen summer feed and water regularly using rainwater.