



April Tip of the Month Planning for a Great Garden

April is a great time to spend time wandering around your yard in between the snow and the rain drops to plan what lies ahead. The simplest aspect of gardening is removing all of the winter debris, rotted foliage and excess bark that have decomposed around the plants. Planning for a great garden is definitely the hardest part. After dreaming of various ways that you can change your gardens during January and February, there is nothing like getting outside, actually visualizing the ideas you accumulated during the winter months. Hopefully you enjoyed looking through gardening magazines, reading articles from the experts on-line and attending seminars inside a warm facility while there is a foot of snow on the ground.

Of course, the most exciting aspect of planning your gardens in April is actually feeling the cool soil in your fingers and fighting the time schedule to separate the overgrown Hosta clumps or Daylily clusters. Depending on the ground temperature, try dividing clumps prior to the "True" leaf development stage when the plant is just emerging from the soil surface. Planning your color palate and texture is a fun aspect of gardening. Flowering time can always be an issue for some, but if you are the type that just likes splashes of color throughout your landscape, then you can easily achieve this goal by choosing plants that you feel comfortable with, colors that accent your structural features, and most important of all, the textures that are visually fun to look at in a morning dew or an evening sunset.

Springtime in Vermont creates quite a challenge when gardening. Cool temperatures during April work either with you or against you. If you are anxious about getting plants in the ground, then a cool, wet April can be detrimental to both your energy level and your plants. All of the hard work preparing beds, and planting in cold soil can sometimes create a harsh reality that "jumping the gun" doesn't always mean success. Cold, wet, soggy ground may be ok for most perennials, woody ornamentals and some seed crops, but throwing an annual that has been grown in a warm window or greenhouse in the soil is definitely a waste of money. This may sound silly, but you would be better off going to your local book store and spending money on children's books to give away, because you'll get a lot more satisfaction. Planting annuals during April in Vermont will leave you disheartened, while handing a child a book and seeing their eyes light up is rewarding!

The cool month of April is always a great time to get the raking done, the winterkill pruned from overwintered roses, woody ornamentals and evergreens that may have seen better days. Remember, leave Rhododendrons, Azaleas and other woody ornamentals that set their buds in the fall alone in the spring until all of the brilliant color has diminished and new growth has started to develop, then it's ok to trim them. Late April (after the potential of heavy run off from the April rains) is a great time to fertilize all of your plants throughout the landscape. Side dressing newly emerged plants will benefit from this shot of fertilizer. GMF (Green Mountain Fertilizer) is best, such as 5-10-5 or 5-10-10. Lawns

will benefit from the addition of Lime (Calcium), which raises the ph of the soil, as all lawns need a high ph to allow nutrients to be taken up through the plants root system, producing lush green blades of grass.

We hope that these April tips will be helpful in this planning stage of producing a successful, rewarding garden during the upcoming season. Questions relating to any of these aspects of gardening can be emailed to flowers@claussens.com, and we will work with you even further to enjoy your experience. We look forward to seeing you in the Garden Center and the Perennial Farm in the next few weeks!