

Spring Garden Planner



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SPRING GARDEN ESSENTIALS CHECKLIST

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- ☐ **ROUND POINT SHOVEL**
Great for heavy digging and lifting when breaking new ground
 - ☐ **HAND PRUNER**
This tool cuts with a clean, scissors-like action
 - ☐ **ASPARAGUS KNIFE/WEEDER**
The most efficient tool for removing deep-rooted weeds
 - ☐ **LAWN OR LEAF RAKE**
 - ☐ **NURSERY SPADE**
Unequaled for excavating a planting hole
 - ☐ **CULTIVATOR**
A tool with curved claws for weeding and aerating the soil
 - ☐ **STAINLESS STEEL TROWEL**
An essential planting tool for digging and removing stubborn weeds
 - ☐ **JAPANESE WEEDER**
The stainless-steel blade slips easily through the soil to sever weed roots below the crown
 - ☐ **DIBBER**
Handy hole-poker for sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, or planting bulbs
 - ☐ **PRUNING SAW**
Used for cutting branches with diameters of more than two inches
 - ☐ **LOPPER**
Scissors-like bypass blades cut cleanly on thicker stems (provides more leverage than a pruner)
 - ☐ **GARDENING GLOVES**
As important as any other tool to protect hands
 - ☐ **FORK**
A tool used for turning soil
 - ☐ **GARDEN TWINE**
For tying back any fallen plants
 - ☐ **ORGANIC FERTILIZER**
Crucial for improving soil quality and promoting healthy plant growth
 - ☐ **SHRUB RAKE**
This rake has a longer handle and a thinner row of tines—ideal for working around shrubs

After a long, hard winter, there's nothing better than renewing our acquaintance with the earth. In many parts of the country, it's time to begin the garden cleanup. Here, tips on what you need to do and advice on equipment that makes the job easier.

TOOLS

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Rake | Gardening gloves |
| Hand cultivator | Trowel |
| Organic fertilizer | Pruners |
| Garden twine | Shrub rake |

Spring cleanup can start anytime it's warm enough to be out in the garden, but don't remove protective wraps and mulches until daytime temperatures are consistently above 45°. Remove the burlap from bushes or any other plants that it has protected during the winter. Wrap the burlap around stakes, label each roll of burlap so that you will know where to place it next winter, and store.

To clean borders, remove leaves with a shrub rake; pick up leaves and place in compost heap. Weed borders and garden.

Lightly fertilize emerging bulbs and perennials with organic fertilizer. Sprinkle around flowers by hand, wearing gloves to protect your skin.

Tie up any tall plants that have fallen over during the winter. Remove any dead wood from climbing and old-fashioned roses, but don't prune them until after they bloom. Remove the brown dead stems directly above a bud, cutting with pruners at a 45° angle.

To clean around trees, use a shrub rake and smooth out top layer of fertilizer or compost. Carefully use fingers to remove mulch from any emerging small bulbs that might be planted around base of trees.

Reseed along edges of garden beds. Loosen soil to prep for grass seed. Sow grass seed by hand, then use the back side of the cultivator or rake to rub seeds into the earth. Tamp down with a rake.

PLANTING 101

Planting well is the most important gardening task: Planting establishes roots, and every leaf, stem, and flower relies on the water, nutrients, and support that roots provide. Begin by testing your soil for nutrient content, pH, organic (humus) content, and texture. For information on soil testing in your area, contact your local cooperative extension office, listed in the phone book under government offices.

Test soil in spring or fall but leave enough time to add any recommended soil amendments and have them incorporated into the soil. Ideally, for spring planting, prepare the soil the previous fall; for fall planting, prepare it in early summer. Use your soil-test results as a guide for preparing planting beds and selecting trees and shrubs.

SUCCESSFUL PLANTING

For vegetables, annuals, perennials, and roses—plants that tend to be compact-rooted but heavy-blooming and heavy-cropping—first prepare a bed: Clear an area of weeds and debris. Using a spade or fork, turn the soil to a depth of 12- to 14-inches and incorporate a 3- to 4-inch layer of compost (or well-rotted manure and any amendments recommended by your soil test) into the top 10 to 12 inches of soil. Rake the soil so it is loose, airy, and flat.

Larger landscape specimens, however, including most shrubs and trees, need to spread their roots across a broader area. You must integrate these plants into a site's natural soil. To accomplish this, you select species adapted to the local soil type, and then take care not to alter too much of the soil within the planting hole. If the soil is compacted or poor, you may add organic matter in the form of compost or sphagnum peat, but make sure that the dose amounts to no more than 25 percent of the whole.

When planting balled and burlapped (trees and shrubs dug up and sold with their root ball wrapped in burlap (or a similar synthetic fabric), be sure to handle the trees and shrubs with care as the root ball can be easily damaged.

Before planting, use a stake or shovel handle to measure the root ball's width and depth, then dig a planting hole that is as deep as the root ball and twice as wide.

Gently set the root ball in the hole, and cut the cords that secure the wrapper. Gently tip the root ball from side to side, slipping the fabric out from beneath. Mound some soil to form a 2-inch high ridge surrounding the plant, fill the well with water, let drain, and refill once more.

For bare-root trees and shrubs (these arrive without any soil around their roots and should be planted immediately), remove any packing material and prune away dead or damaged roots. Soak the roots in a bucket of cool water for at least one hour and up to 8 hours.

To plant, dig a hole about twice as wide as the root system and deep enough to accommodate the roots. Mound some soil in the center of the planting hole, forming a cone almost to the top of the hole. Set the plant on the cone so the crown is just below the soil line. Spread the roots around the cone, and refill the hole with the soil, gently pressing out any air pockets.

Mound more soil around the planting hole to form a 2-inch-high ridge around the perimeter of the hole to act as a catchbasin. Water thoroughly, filling the basin and allowing the water to settle several times. Spread a 2-inch layer of mulch around the base of the plant.

Always water well immediately after planting, and give new plants at least an inch of water weekly during dry spells through the rest of the first growing season.

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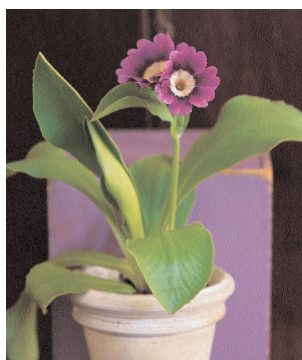
EARLY BLOOM GLOSSARY

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You don't have to wait until May or June to see glimpses of color in your garden. The following glossary of container flowering plants, perennials, and trees ensure a beautiful outdoor array this spring—and for years to come.

SPRING CONTAINERS: PRIMROSE, VIOLA, STOCK

One of the quickest and easiest ways to decorate your outdoor spaces is with pretty, plant containers. Plant a spring mix of primroses, stock, and violas in rich shades of blue and purple.



PRIMROSE (*Primula auricula* cultivar shown)

DESCRIPTION: The colorful, single to double blooms of this cool-season plant are often sold by florists from late winter to early spring to bring color indoors or use in early spring containers outside. After bloom, the plants are generally composted.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, fragrance

GARDEN USES: Indoors, containers

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Grow in a pot filled with a fast-draining, all-purpose potting mix. Set plants at the same level they grew in previous pot. The soil level should be 1/2- to 1-inch below rim of pot to provide a water reservoir when watering.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Water thoroughly when soil surface is dry to the touch. Do not allow soil to dry out. In early spring, apply an all-purpose fertilizer during active growth, following label directions.

GARDEN HINT: German or poison primrose (*P. obconica*) is so named because its foliage, which can cause a skin rash, is poisonous. If you grow this plant, wear gloves when handling it to avoid the risk of skin irritation, and keep it away from children and pets.



VIOLA (*Viola* 'Sorbet Purple Duet' shown)

DESCRIPTION: A cousin to the pansy, violas are among the most popular garden plants, adding color, whimsy, and grace to a border or container.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, frost-tolerant

GARDEN USES: Ground covers, containers, flower beds and borders

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Start indoors 7-9 weeks before moving outdoors, sowing seeds 1/8-1/4 inch deep. If seedlings are hardened off, they will tolerate light frost. Transplant as soon as soil can be worked after frost. Water upon planting. To transplant bought violas, make a small hole with a trowel and tuck violas into prepared soil 4 inches apart.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Monitor soil moisture all season. Feed with a balanced water-soluble or slow-release fertilizer, following package directions.

GARDEN HINT: Cut back plants hard after they finish flowering to encourage a second flush of blooms when cool weather returns in fall. In regions with mild winters, plant in fall.



STOCK (*Matthiola* 'Giant Imperial' shown)

DESCRIPTION: A great addition to containers or a cutting garden, stock produces intensely scented flower spikes in delicate shades of pink, violet, and white. Although this European native performs best where summers are cool, it can be enjoyed in warmer climates.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, fragrance

GARDEN USES: Containers, Flower beds and borders

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Start indoors, barely covered (light is required for germination), 6-8 weeks before last frost. Choose a sunny, well-drained site, and amend with compost or well-rotted manure before setting out young plants. Or direct sow in spring after danger of frost has passed. Days to Germination: 7-21

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Maintain soil moisture all season. Apply a balanced water-soluble or slow-release fertilizer monthly, following label directions.

GARDEN HINT: To dry, wait until the flowers are fully open, and hang bunches of 3-5 upside down in a cool, dry place.

PERENNIALS: BARRENWORT, LUNGWORT, BLEEDING HEART



BARRENWORT (*Epimedium x rubrum* shown)

DESCRIPTION: A perennial native to Japan, barrenwort is a long-living, shade-loving species that provides beautiful ground cover under trees and shrubs. Its small heart-shaped leaves are attractive year-round.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, attractive foliage, disease resistant, drought tolerant, fall foliage colors, shade tolerant, winter interest

GARDEN USES: Ground covers, naturalizing, and shade/woodland gardens

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Start with new plants or divisions. Choose a partially shady site with rich, fertile soil. Amend with well-rotted manure or compost. Plant 12 inches apart. Mulch to conserve moisture and protect against winter frost.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Water after planting, and monitor soil moisture throughout the growing season. Feed with a balanced fertilizer after flowering.

GARDEN HINT: Epimedium is one of the few perennials that tolerates shade and dry soil.



LUNGWORT (*Pulmonaria 'Milky Way'* shown)

DESCRIPTION: Lungwort is a standout in shady locations. This perennial bears loose clusters of violet flowers in early spring that darken with age, and new, showier leaves that develop after the plant has flowered. Lungwort is one of the rare plants that tolerates dry shade.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, attractive foliage, drought tolerant, shade tolerant

GARDEN USES: Ground covers, containers, flower beds and borders, shade/woodland gardens

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Start with new plants or root divisions. Plant in spring or fall. Choose a sunny site with moist, well-drained soil and amend with well-rotted manure or compost. Set plants at the same depth they were in pot, spacing at a distance equal to their mature spread. Water after planting, and mulch to conserve moisture.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Monitor soil moisture all season. In early spring, feed with an all-purpose fertilizer during active growth, following label directions.

GARDEN HINT: Lungwort flowers, among the first to appear in spring, are held above emerging foliage on stems with small, modified leaves. When the flowers die, remove the entire stem to make way for a mound of lush, full-sized leaves.



BLEEDING HEART (*Dicentra spectabilis* shown)

DESCRIPTION: This perennial is marked by sprays of heart-shaped, rose-pink and white flowers, and finely cut, pale-green leaves. This easy-to-grow plant likes a shady spot and plenty of water, and may go dormant in areas with hot summers.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, attractive foliage, heirloom or antique, shade tolerant, wet tolerant

GARDEN USES: Forcing (dig and pot dormant rhizome in early spring; place indoors in a cool location and water.), naturalizing flower beds and borders, shade/woodland gardens

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Set out new plants in spring or divisions in fall. Choose a shady, moist site with neutral or slightly alkaline soil and amend with well-rotted manure or compost. Set plants at the same depth they were in the pot, spacing at a distance equal to mature spread. Water after planting and mulch to conserve moisture.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Maintain soil moisture all season. Feed after flowering with a balanced, granular fertilizer, following label directions.

GARDEN HINT: Bleeding heart usually goes dormant in midsummer, especially in the South, but if it is well watered, it is more likely to keep its foliage until fall.

TREES: MAGNOLIA, WITCH HAZEL, DOGWOOD



MAGNOLIA (*Magnolia x loebneri* 'Merrill' shown)

DESCRIPTION: These early bloomers are marked by flowers on leafless branches and come in shades of cream, yellow, pink, and reddish purple. Magnolias are among the most primitive flowering plants in the world. Fossil remains of magnolia-like blossoms date back 60 million years.

FEATURES: Attractive foliage, disease resistant, fragrance, winter interest

OTHER USES: Cutting or arrangements

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Plant balled-and-burlaped plants in early spring; container-grown plants may be planted at any time in the season as long as they are kept moist after planting. Choose a sunny site with fertile, humus-rich, well-drained soil, making sure there is enough room for the tree to reach its mature height and spread. In early spring, dig a hole twice as wide as the container or root ball. Set plant at same depth or slightly higher than it was in pot, or if balled, level soil with top of root ball. Fill hole around plant with soil. Mound soil to form a 2-inch-high ridge around perimeter of the hole to act as a catch basin. If plant is balled in synthetic fabric, remove carefully before backfilling. Cotton or all-natural burlap may be left around root ball and then peeled back once plant is set in hole. Water thoroughly, filling the basin and allowing water to settle several times. Spread 2-inch layer of mulch around plant.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Monitor soil moisture all season. Each spring, feed with slow-release balanced fertilizer, following package directions, and spread mulch beneath tree canopy, at least 6 inches away from trunk.

GARDEN HINT: Magnolias develop beautiful winter forms and attractive gray bark. Avoid damaging trunks with lawn mowers or string trimmers, as wounds to bark may encourage disease and even kill the tree if severe. This can be avoided by carefully mulching a 3- to 4-foot area around plant.



WITCH HAZEL (*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Primavera' shown)

DESCRIPTION: Boasting primrose yellow blooms and a purple-red color at the base, this heavy bloomer has a sweet scent.

FEATURES: Attractive foliage, deciduous, fall foliage colors, fragrance, North American native or wildflower, shade tolerant, winter interest

GARDEN USES: Hedges or shrub borders

OTHER USES: Medicinal (bark used as an astringent)

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Choose a sunny to partly shady site with well-drained soil, making sure there is enough room for the shrub to reach its mature size. In early spring, dig a hole twice as wide as the container or root ball. Set plant at same depth or slightly higher than it was in pot, or if balled, level with top of root ball. If plant is balled in synthetic fabric, remove carefully before backfilling. Natural-fiber burlap may be peeled back and left in ground once plant is set in hole. Fill hole around plant with soil. Mound soil to form a 2-inch-high ridge around perimeter of hole to act as a catchbasin. Water thoroughly, filling the basin and allowing water to settle several times. Spread 2-inch layer of mulch around plant.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Maintain uniform soil moisture the first season. Be sure soil is moist before ground freezes in fall. Each spring before growth begins, apply an all-purpose fertilizer, following label directions. Once shrub is established, usually by the third year, water only during drought.

GARDEN HINT: Because witch hazel is one of the earliest flowering garden shrubs, plant it in a spot where its blooms can be enjoyed from indoors. Choose a site protected from cold winds.

TREES: MAGNOLIA, WITCH HAZEL, DOGWOOD (contd.)



DOGWOOD (*Cornus florida* shown)

DESCRIPTION: In April, the abundant creamy-white bracts of *C. florida* 'White Cloud' open before the leaves emerge. Gracefully rounded, this cultivar grows about twenty feet tall and wide. Zones 5 to 9 (see page 14).

FEATURES: Attractive flowers, attracts butterflies, deciduous, drought tolerant, fall foliage colors, wet tolerant, winter interest

GARDEN USES: Naturalizing, hedges or shrub borders, shade/woodland gardens

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Choose a sunny to partly sunny site with well-drained soil making sure there is enough room for shrub to reach its mature spread. In early spring, dig a hole twice as wide as container or root ball. Set plant at same depth or slightly higher than it was in the pot, or if balled, with top of root ball. Fill in hole around plant with soil, mound soil to form a 2-inch-high ridge around perimeter of the hole to act as a catch basin. If plant is balled in plastic, remove carefully before planting. Burlap may be left around root ball and then peeled back once plant is set in hole. Water thoroughly, filling the basin and allowing water to settle several times. Spread 2-inch layer of mulch around plant.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Maintain uniform soil moisture the first season. Be sure the soil is moist before the ground freezes in fall. Each spring before growth begins, apply an all-purpose fertilizer, following label directions. Once shrub is established, usually by the third year, water only in times of drought.

GARDEN HINT: Although dogwoods require little pruning beyond an early elimination of crossed or rubbed branches, inspect *c. florida* regularly for signs of damage or ailment, and nip off all deadwood. To reduce its vulnerability to blight, choose a healthy, nursery-grown tree; avoid planting in waterside spots where dampness might linger on the leaves; during dry spells, water well every week.

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TRY SPRING BULBS
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While most bulbs are planted in the fall and bloom in the spring, there are some beautiful varieties that can be planted once the ground has warmed, and will provide color and interest through the early fall.



DAHLIA ('Lupin Bernie' shown)

DESCRIPTION: Dahlias, which boast a diversity of blooms, are New World plants that originated in Mexico. Cultivated by the Aztecs for generations, dahlias are still widely praised for their beauty and adaptability. And if started in containers, they will bloom weeks ahead of schedule.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers

GARDEN USES: Containers, flower beds

OTHER USES: Cutting or arranging

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: Plant in compost-rich, well-drained beds or containers in spring when soil has warmed. To avoid piercing tubers, insert support stakes in soil before planting. Set tubers 4 to 6 inches deep and at least 2 feet apart. Water upon planting, and mulch to conserve moisture.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Maintain soil moisture all season. Feed weekly with an all-purpose fertilizer (5-10-5), following package directions.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE: For garden plants, pinch out center growing point early in the season to encourage bushiness. For exhibition-quality blooms, pinch out some side shoots and buds to encourage fewer but larger blooms. Stake to support bushy plants and heavy flowers. Place 5 stakes around plant's perimeter and wind twine from stake to stake, creating a star-shaped web around stems.

GARDEN HINT: In mild climates, dahlia tubers may be left in the ground year-round. In colder climates, carefully lift tubers after the first fall frost blackens the foliage. Store them in a cool spot (40°F) in shallow boxes of peat or sand, covered so only the stems poke out.



GLADIOLUS (*Gladiolus* 'Violetta' shown)

DESCRIPTION: Gladiolus name is derived from the Latin word for sword, which refers to the plant's distinctive foliage. Gladiolus come in a range of colors—from pistachio to plum, mauve to melon, tangerine, and bisque.

FEATURES: Attractive flowers

GARDEN USES: Flower beds and borders

OTHER USES: Cutting or arranging

HOW TO PLANT/SOW: After danger of frost has passed and soil has warmed, plant corms (bulblike structures) 6-8 inches apart and 6 to 8 inches deep. Begin watering once new growth emerges in spring. Mulch to conserve moisture. For a continuous harvest of Gladiolus flowers for cutting, plant new bulbs every 2 weeks until August.

WATER AND FERTILIZE: Monitor soil moisture all season, watering as needed. Feed biweekly with a balanced, soluble fertilizer, following label directions. After plants flower, stop fertilizing and reduce watering.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE: In colder regions, dig corms 6 weeks after flowering or after first frost; cut off foliage, and allow corms to dry in a well-ventilated, frost-free place. Once dry, remove the old corms from the new, and compost the old. Store corms in a cool spot (40°F), in shallow boxes covered with peat or sand.

GARDEN HINT: It is a good idea to stake all gladioli. Because the flowers at the bottom of the stalk open first, harvest cut flowers early, before these fade.

Although laying out a garden is never simple, you can get started on the right track by following the basic principles of good design. Whether you're creating a romantic cottage garden or a formal landscape, begin with practical considerations.

BASIC DESIGN

A well-designed garden should link the house to the yard both physically and visually, affecting the entire living space: Interiors that open onto terraces and views feel expansive, while gardens that fold into living areas impart intimacy. Consider the prevailing spirit of the landscape—thinking about your region, neighborhood, and house—then choose and place plants and structures accordingly.

Make the garden accessible by creating a physical connection, such as French doors, from rooms to outdoor areas or a dining terrace close to the kitchen.

Take digital photos of the landscape and use photos to help sketch a rough design of living spaces. Visualizing your proposed layouts and features will ensure that additions are in scale with existing elements.

Plot patios and walks, taking cues from your home's style and materials. Take stock of the view from each window to determine sight lines that will organize your landscape. Place a path where you naturally move through the lot.

Look for existing noteworthy elements, such as specimen trees, mature hedges, and stone walls, which can give a new garden instant character. (But don't hesitate to remove features you'd rather live without, such as overgrown foundation shrubs that block windows.)

Use benches or urns as focal points in natural resting places—under shady trees or at the intersections of paths.

To create the illusion of a single expansive space, note choice trees within view, and plant the same kinds of trees on your own land.

PLANT PALETTE

Once your garden design—terrace paving, paths, trees, arbors, and hedges—is clearly drawn, compose a plant palette. Consider what thrives in your neighbors' yards and suits the locale, whether native plants or transplants from similar conditions. Consider rainfall and seasonal temperatures as well as coastal and inland influences.

Consult books and your local nursery to find out the requirements for the plants you like and how large they will grow.

Decide how much maintenance you're willing to commit to: Do you welcome challenges, or do you need tough, self-sufficient plants?

Think about whether the emphasis will be on foliage textures, flowers, or both. Do you want seasonal change or year-round, evergreen fullness?

Buy small: As a rule, younger plants tend to acclimate better to new settings.

Group plants with similar irrigation needs as well as harmonious colors and textures. Save exotic, finicky ones for pots, where they can get individual attention.

Be bold: Create a strong, unified effect by planting in drifts of one or two kinds of plants rather than mixing many different types in one area.

Variety enlivens a garden. Consider creating a number of small, intimate spaces that lead from one to another, anchored by a focal point such as an urn or a bubbling fountain, which will muffle road sounds.

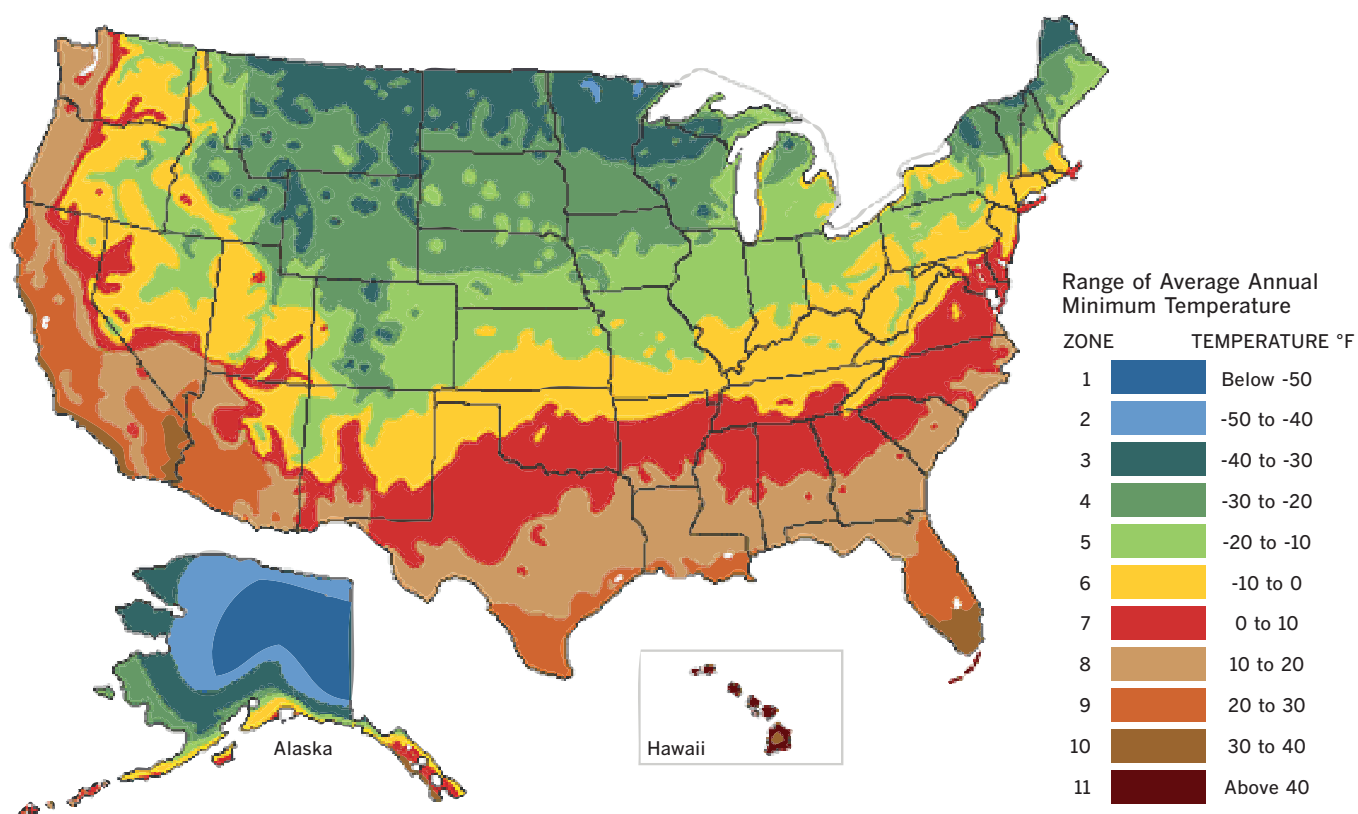
Separate areas from one another by planting hedges and shrub borders. Install arbors, trellises, or other structures for climbing vines, which will shelter seating areas and create intimacy.

Raise or lower parts of the terrain by hauling in or scooping out dirt. While a small, flat lot reveals its secrets all at once, a graded landscape fools the eye into believing the garden is larger.

Make the outdoors a place to explore: Build steps that follow a slope and paths that curve out of sight, or hide a bubbling fountain; the sound of water will compel visitors to seek its source.

PRINTABLE CHART: PLANT HARDINESS ZONES

When selecting plants for your garden, use hardiness zones to help you decide if they will thrive in your area. To find your zone, see the map below. This is only one indication of plant hardiness. Summer temperatures, humidity, rainfall and snow cover will also affect how well a plant will do in your area.



* Please use a color printer to duplicate this zone map for easier readability.

Adapted from the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, 1990.

CABBAGE AND RADISH SLAW WITH PEANUT DRESSING

SERVES 8 TO 10

The peanut dressing can be made ahead and refrigerated in an airtight container up to four days; bring it to room temperature before using. You can let this slaw stand for up to one hour after dressing it; if you do so, stir in the peanuts and red radishes just before serving so they stay crunchy.

1 tablespoon finely chopped, peeled fresh ginger

1/4 cup coarsely chopped shallots

1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon creamy peanut butter

1/2 cup rice-wine vinegar (not seasoned)

3 tablespoons soy sauce

3 tablespoons packed dark-brown sugar

1/4 cup canola oil

1 small green cabbage (about 1 3/4 pounds), finely shredded

1 medium daikon radish, cut into 1/8-inch-thick matchsticks

16 red radishes, halved lengthwise and cut into thin half-moons

4 scallions cut on the diagonal into long, thin slices

1/2 cup dry-roasted peanuts

1. Blend ginger, shallot, peanut butter, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, and oil in a blender until smooth; set aside.

2. Put cabbage, daikon radish, red radishes, scallions, and peanuts in a large serving bowl. Pour in peanut dressing; toss thoroughly.

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WATERCRESS AND RAMP SOUP

SERVES 8

If ramps aren't available in your area, using more leeks makes an equally delicious soup.

5 tablespoons unsalted butter

5 cups thinly sliced leeks, white and pale-green parts only (7 to 8 medium leeks)

2 ramps, thinly sliced

4 cups water

2 cups milk

2 medium russet potatoes (about 1 pound), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes

1 tablespoon plus 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

2 bunches (about 8 ounces) watercress, washed, tough ends trimmed

1. In a 5-quart saucepan, melt 3 tablespoons butter over medium heat. Add 3 cups sliced leeks and 1 cup sliced ramps; reduce heat to medium low. Sauté until tender, about 10 minutes. Add 4 cups water, 1 cup milk, the potatoes, 1 tablespoon salt, and the pepper; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to medium low; simmer until potatoes are tender, about 7 minutes. Add watercress; increase heat to medium. Cook about 3 minutes, until watercress is tender and bright green. Cool slightly. Transfer in 1-cup batches to the jar of a blender; puree. Return all of it to pot over low heat; thin with remaining cup milk.

2. In a medium sauté pan, melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter over medium-low heat. Add remaining 2 cups sliced leeks, remaining cup sliced ramps, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Sauté, stirring frequently, until leeks are tender but still green, 5 to 10 minutes. Do not let them brown. Ladle soup into bowls; garnish with leek mixture. Serve hot.

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SMASHED PEAS WITH FRESH MINT

SERVES 2

When they're in season, use fresh peas instead of frozen ones. Cook them in salted boiling water for three to six minutes before adding them in step 2. Serve with wedges of warm flatbread.

1 medium leek (8 ounces), white and pale-green parts only

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon minced garlic

6 tablespoons finely chopped shallots (about 3)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 cups frozen peas, thawed

2 tablespoons, **Homemade Chicken Stock**, or low-sodium canned chicken broth, skimmed of fat

1/4 cup chopped fresh mint

FOLD

1. Quarter leek lengthwise, then slice crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick pieces. Place leeks in a large bowl of cold water, and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to rid them of dirt and sand. Lift leeks out of the water with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels.

2. In a medium skillet, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over low heat; add garlic, shallots, leeks, salt, and pepper. Cook until very soft but not browned, about 15 minutes. Add peas, raise heat to medium, and cook, stirring, until peas are heated through, 3 to 5 minutes.

3. Transfer the pea mixture to the bowl of a food processor. Add chicken stock and remaining tablespoon of olive oil; pulse until mixture is a coarse purée, about 12 pulses. Transfer half the purée to a medium bowl. Process the remaining half for 15 seconds, then combine with the coarsely puréed peas. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper, if necessary.

4. Transfer smashed peas to a serving dish. Stir in mint. Serve immediately or at room temperature.

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SPRING VEGETABLE SAUTÉ

SERVES 2

This fresh, easy-to-make dish can be prepared with homemade or store-bought chicken stock.

| | |
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| 3 lemons, juiced; lemon halves reserved | 3 ounces, haricot verts or thin green beans, trimmed |
| 6 baby artichokes (12 ounces) | 3 tablespoons unsalted butter |
| 1 teaspoon dried oregano | 3 tablespoons, Homemade Chicken Stock , or low-sodium canned chicken broth, skimmed of fat |
| 1 clove garlic, cut in half | 1/4 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves |
| 1/2 teaspoon whole black peppercorns | 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper |
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | |
| 16 white pearl onions | |
| 24 baby carrots, stems trimmed to 3/4 inch | |
| 1 1/2 teaspoons salt | |
| 12 scallions, white and light-green parts only, cut into 1 1/2-inch lengths | |

FOLD

1. Fill a medium bowl with water and 2 tablespoons lemon juice; set aside. With a knife, remove all but 1/2 inch stem from artichokes. Cut off sharp tips; remove tough outer leaves, trimming down to yellow inner leaves. Quarter artichokes lengthwise. If they have tough purple chokes, remove with a spoon. Rub artichoke pieces with lemon halves, and place them in lemon water as you work.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine 3 1/2 quarts water, 2 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice, oregano, garlic, peppercorns, and olive oil. Bring to a boil, and add artichoke quarters. Cook 8 minutes, until tender. Let artichokes cool in the cooking liquid.
3. Meanwhile, fill a medium bowl with ice water; set aside. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. To peel the pearl onions, boil for 1 minute, and remove with a slotted spoon. When cool enough to handle, peel, leaving root and stem ends intact. Set aside.
4. Return water to a boil. Add carrots and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook 6 minutes, or until tender. Transfer to bowl of ice water to stop cooking. When carrots have cooled, remove from water with a slotted spoon and set aside. When water has resumed boiling, separately repeat blanching and cooling process with remaining vegetables. Blanch haricots verts and scallions 30 seconds each and peeled pearl onions for 3 minutes.
5. Just before serving, heat 2 tablespoons butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add vegetables, and sauté, stirring, until vegetables are hot and coated with butter. Add stock, parsley, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper; toss and serve.

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