



CALENDAR OF GARDENING TASKS

Points to consider all year for all four seasons:

- Enjoy your garden. Much of what is listed below are chores, but make sure you take time to actually smell the roses, too! However, remember working in your garden is good for your health and your soul!
- Not all tasks will relate to your garden. Use a highlighter pen to specify which are of most importance to you!
- Try not to spray nasties as even the most gentle pesticides are still better not used. If possible, rub or hose off insects such as aphids and scales.
- Use your local horticulturist to help you plan and plant your garden. Use the AIH website www.aih.org.au to find the appropriate person for your situation (or phone 02 8001 6198 or email presnsw@aih.org.com)
- Start a compost heap, remembering to put some bulky items such as leaves, grass clippings, and newspaper, balanced by food scraps and manures. Turn your heap regularly (one a week) and add water if too dry, and more leaves if too wet!
- Start a worm farm using all your fruit and vegetable waste except for garlic, onion, chives, leek and all citrus. You can also add egg shells, used tea leaves and tea bags, coffee grinds and dry bread.

JANUARY

- Ensure that all plants receive adequate water, it is best to water in the early morning giving plants and lawns a good soaking; many areas have restrictions so check with (<http://www.sydneywater.com.au>) or phone customer enquiries on 13 20 92 to check. Fines are heavy for those not abiding by restrictions.
- Wear a hat and sunscreen and preferably work in your garden in the cool part of the day.
- Dead head plants to prolong flowering.
- Cuttings of plants such as fuchsia and geranium can be taken at this time. Take most leaves off, and dip cutting in honey to promote root growth.
- Do not cut grass too short as you are cutting off the plants' food store, and it makes the ground hotter and more stressful for the grass.
- Remove fallen leaves from lawns, mulch (except camphor laure!) and put into compost heap.
- Lawns should be top-dressed with sandy loam soil, but only where the lawn is dangerously uneven; never put it on too thickly.
- January is an important time for mulching vegetables, flowers, fruit, natives, vines and other plants. It is important to conserve water in soil, improve soil structure and stop weeds growing. Mulch such as lucerne hay, sugar cane and tea tree mulch, gravels, and barks can be used depending on the garden style.
- Unless there has been no rain, fertilise with pelleted manures.
- Look out for fungal problems, as January is often a humid, wet month. Check for black spot and powdery mildew on roses. Use potassium bicarbonate to control this. Read instructions carefully. Insects are also active this month. Check new growth especially on all plants, for attack. Aphids, caterpillars and thrips can be particularly destructive. Use pyrethrum or white oil to control these, again checking safety precautions and method of use.
- Enjoy the colour of bougainvillea, pentas and daisies at this time.

FEBRUARY

- Humidity can be a problem for some plants, so be on the lookout for mildew on plants. Spray with potassium bicarbonate fungicide, but only after reading the labels for directions and safety precautions.
- Remove agapanthus flowers at base of plant as soon as the colour has gone. This will prevent seeds germinating and spreading (especially into bushland).
- Lightly prune NSW Christmas bush as 'flowers' fade.
- Hydrangeas can be pruned now (or can be left to July). Prune to plump double buds, remove thick old canes or those that are weak.
- Prune new 'wispy' shoots of wisteria to 2nd bud.
- Cuttings of many evergreen plants can be struck, such as daisies.
- Divide and plant bearded iris into prepared soil – ensure to leave rhizomes exposed.
- Remove faded heads from all flowering plants including dahlias.
- Lightly prune, feed and mulch roses, but do not feed with rose food if water is not available.
- Stake chrysanthemums for display and to prevent damage from winds.
- Re-pot palms overlooked in spring, use a good quality potting mix containing water crystals and bead-like slow release fertilisers which carry the Australian Standard tick.
- Begin planting herbs, such as parsley and basil.
- Check citrus such as lemons and orange for leaf miner which attacks new leaves. Spray plants with heavily diluted white oil (check label again for quantities).
- If rain occurs, check garden beds for snails and slugs. Use snail pellets (sparingly!) to control these if they are bad using a bird and pet friendly type. If infestation is not bad, remove snails from plants, drowning in flat beer.

MARCH

- Humidity continues to be a problem, especially in areas near the ocean.
- Prepare soil with added lime and manure for sweet peas and sow on March 17th, digging soil to a spade depth.
- Continue to spray citrus with approved oil to prevent leaf miner infestation.
- De-head pentas and take cutting from these heat-loving, drought tolerant plants.
- Feed azaleas and camellias with a complete fertiliser as buds develop, but only after they have been well watered.
- Disbud camellia japonicas leaving one or two buds only.
- Feed native plants such as grevillea and banksia with blood and bone.
- Begin to plant bulbs such as daffodils, freesias and bluebells.
- Prune climbing roses to 2nd bud on side branches off main stem.
- Divide, plant and top-dress strawberries (with straw or lucerne hay).
- Watch out for insects such as black aphids on roses and chrysanthemums. Spray, following directions, using products such as Pyrethrum.
- If the lawn has round brown spots, it could be dollar spot which may need drenching with a fungicide.
- Consider planting drought tolerant annuals such as ageratum for colour.
- Plant brassica seedlings, such as broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage. Prepare soil with well-rotted cow manure.
- Enjoy frangipani perfume and flowers.

APRIL

- Flowering annual seedlings can be planted out in drifts for spring colour.
- Lawns can be given a last feed before the onset of winter.
- Prune back buddleias after flowers have finished.
- Abutilon bushes, which have damage from caterpillar, should be cut back.
- Lift and divide perennials, and plant into garden beds prepared with added compost and well rotted manure. If weather is dry, at least dead head plants such as asters and phlox.
- Lavender bushes can be pruned lightly this month.
- Prune old perennials such as dahlias.
- Main month for spring flowering bulb planting.
- Enjoy the perennial Japanese wind flowers and the sweetly perfumed daphne.
- Re-pot indoor plants other than palms now, using good quality Australian Standard potting mix.
- Rake up autumn leaves from trees such as liquidambar, and either add to compost or store in garbage bags for addition later.

MAY

- Continue collecting fallen leaves from deciduous trees and place in compost heap.
- Cut back to ground level many perennials including phlox, pentstemons, perennial asters etc. If not done in April.
- Dahlia tubers can be lifted as flowering finishes and foliage dies back. Store in cool dry spot. Clip pegs to tubers to remind what colour flowers are, e.g. red peg for red flower.
- Impatiens can be trimmed to keep plants tidy as they can become straggly in winter.
- Lillium spp can be planted, for humid areas November lilies are probably best.
- Keep nipping the tips from sweet peas to make them bushy and to increase the number of flowers.
- Plant broad beans, cabbages and shallots in suitably prepared soil.
- Plant rhubarb crowns in soil that has been prepared with well rotted manures. Buy crowns with rich colour as they will maintain this.
- Bearded iris may be fed with blood and bone - be sure to keep rhizomes above the soil level.
- Cut back tibouchinas after flowering and tip prune new growth to keep shrub compact.
- Move pot plants if necessary to sheltered spots for winter period.
- May is a good month for planting shrubs and evergreen shrubs. Prepare soil well, using manures, mulch and water crystals for good preparation.
- Water indoor plants much less. Do not feed them but check for scale insects and two-spotted mite. Spray with white oil after dusting leaves, and reading directions on labels.

JUNE

- Continue to collect fallen leaves, especially from lawns and place in compost heap.
- If you have not already pruned your hydrangeas do so now, remove all dead wood to base of the plant as these have lost vigour and will not flower well in the future. Prune good stems to a firm double bud and don't cut off shoots with healthy growth at the top – these will give you early blooms.
- Don't be tempted to prune roses, leave until later next month.
- After chrysanthemums have finished flowering, they can be trimmed off at the base.
- Plant summer flowering bulbs e.g. gladioli, hippeastrum, lilliums etc reading instructions on packets as some bulbs must be planted deeply, others partly above the ground.
- Plumbago can be quite heavily pruned this month.
- Rhubarb crowns can be planted out in well rotted, manure enriched soil.
- Prune and plant deciduous fruit trees.
- Cut back ginger and cannas at ground level, as they do not re-flower on the same canes.
- Take hardwood cuttings of hydrangeas, oleanders, making sure they are planted the right way up.
- A fallow vegetable patch can be improved by applying lucerne hay, lime and well-rotted manure.
- Check deciduous trees and shrubs while they are bare for dead and diseased wood, removing it with a sharp saw with a clean cut.
- Buy polyanthus plants and use for cheap, cheery (temporary!) indoor colour.
- Check citrus such as lemons and oranges for the first signs of stink bug (bronze orange bug). The earlier, nymphal stages of green and orange are easier to kill, with an application of White Oil or Pyrethrum (following direction).

JULY

- Prune modern roses, place all dead leaves and prunings in waste bin. Remove growth less than pencil thick, branches that cross, and those that are very woody.
- Add well-rotted manure to soil around plants.
- Give rose bushes a spray with lime sulphur ensuring that all stems are completely wet and soil under is drenched to kill off any fungal spores in the soil.
- Plant bare rooted roses (prune later).
- Plant deciduous fruit trees and vines.
- Find sheltered, sunny part of the garden, and examine your garden for its strengths and weaknesses. Congratulate yourself on what is working; consider how you can improve the parts that are not. For extra assistance, consult a horticulturist at your local nursery.
- Remove spent heads off bulbs and annuals so that they will not go to seed and the latter will continue to flower. Use liquid fertilisers for bulbs as they die back, on annuals to encourage further flowering, but only on plants that have been well watered beforehand.
- Enjoy the flowers on clivia and a shady dry spot, perhaps investing in a cream or variegated variety.

AUGUST

- Check that all potted plants are well watered and are secure, August is generally a very cold and windy month.
- Remove old canes from dipladenias and train new tendrils.
- Plant fruit trees, herbs, vines, citrus and nuts.
- Check existing citrus for citrus gall wasp, cut off and put in vegetation bin.
- Mulch and fertilise established trees.
- Begin to re-pot ferns, palms and orchids.
- Plant azaleas, camellias and magnolias.
- Bare rooted roses can still be planted, but hurry!
- Fertilise annuals such as primula and pansies with water-soluble fertilisers. Make sure to dead-head them, so they will flower for longer.
- Camellias that have finished flowering can be trimmed with hedge clippers.
- Aphids love the new growth on a variety of plants, but especially roses. Wash off and spray with Pyrethrum (following instructions).
- Tip prune and feed fuchsias.
- Plant some tomato seedlings.
- Buy a potted brown boronia (*Boronia megastigma*) to enjoy temporarily indoors.
- Enjoy perfumed magnolia flowers in their various colours and flower styles.
- Spray with selected herbicide for bindii and broad leaf weeds in lawn.

SEPTEMBER

- Spring! A plethora of plants will be flowering and fruiting this month, so enjoy all the beauty by having a picnic in a park or reading the paper on the lawn.
- Prune hibiscus spp remembering that they flower on new growth.
- Start feeding roses regularly with a complete fertiliser, except for those newly planted, as this may burn the roots.
- Sow seeds of summer flowering annuals and place in a warm place.
- Plant shrubs, climbers, herbs, nuts, stone fruit and vines.
- Plant a range of vegetables such as pumpkin, lettuce and celery. Most annual herbs (like sweet basil) can also be planted successfully.
- Plant summer annual seedlings such as petunias and marigolds.
- Prune japonica (chaenomeles) and diosma after they have finished flowering.
- If you must grow azaleas in a humid climate like Sydney, much spraying will be required. Use fungicides to control powdery mildew and petal blight. Systemic insecticides and miticides will probably be needed to control a range of attackers such as two spotted mite and azalea lace bug.
- Use white broken eggshells to control cabbage white butterfly on members of the cabbage family.
- Water Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) on gardenias to encourage deep green, glossy leaves.
- Mulch garden beds with your preferred form – gravel, bark, lucerne, sugar cane, shredded newspaper. Remember mulches keep weeds down, help to hold moisture and break down to improve soil quality.
- Feed your lawn, watering both before and after. If there has been no rain, it may be better to leave fertilising until the rain comes.
- Enjoy the delicate, short lived but sweetly perfumed magnificence of wisteria, preferably in someone else's garden – it is a plant that needs both room to grow and much maintenance to keep it from taking over.

OCTOBER

- Feed and water all bulbs that have flowered, removing spent flowers.
- Plant container grown trees and vines.
- On established fruit trees, fertilise with sulphate of ammonia at the drip line, watering well both before and after feeding.
- Prune wild spring growth on wisteria and jasmine.
- Prune spent flowers on bottlebrush trees.
- Check for the same pests and diseases as for spring, and control as you did. There are a lot of caterpillars on a range of annuals, perennials, shrubs and bulbs. Try picking them off or spray with Pyrethrum based product.
- Plant the perfumed star jasmine to climb over and unsightly wall. It will need support.
- If planting a new lawn, October is a good month for this.
- Enjoy a profusion of roses flowering now.
- Visit a local garden that is open to the public through 'The Australian Open Garden Scheme' (www.opengarden.org.au) to get yourself inspired.

NOVEMBER

- Remove foliage from bulbs only after yellowing takes place.
- Keep deadheading rose bushes after flowers die, cut to an outward facing bud at a 5 leaflet bud.
- Banksia roses can be pruned quite heavily this month, remove all deadwood to main stems.
- Watch that climbers such as wisteria and jasmine don't get out of control and reach. Always prune wisteria to 2nd bud on new shoots.
- Plant container grown trees and vines.
- As the weather is getting really hot, protect plants from the heat with mulch, also keeping them well watered.
- Plant bearded iris and dahlia tubers, stake the latter in readiness.
- Prune philadelphus, cutting out old woody canes as these have lost their vigour, and will never flower as well.
- Prune climbing roses, such as albertine, after they have finished flowering.
- As long as there has been rain, fertilise, fertilise, fertilise!! Anything that flowers or fruits appreciates a bit of a boost, whether it is from your compost heap, pelleted poo, or a liquid foliar feed.
- Lawns should be growing well now, if well watered and fed.
- Enjoy the blues in the garden at this time of year, especially the jacaranda and agapanthus.

DECEMBER

- Regular watering is essential (if permitted!). Try to avoid the hottest time of the day, as most of the water will be evaporated off.
- Plant a passionfruit, preparing the soil beforehand with lots of well-rotted compost and manures.
- When cutting plants from the garden this month, water well the day before, and cut flowers as early as you can (6.00am??!!).
- If you are going away for Christmas, try and find someone to water your garden, at least the precious plants.
- Keep the mower blades high – scalping the lawn will lead to a dust bowl.
- Buy a living Christmas tree, and take on the challenge of keeping it alive for the following year. (First step, take it outside as soon as Christmas is over!)
- Keep ahead of weeding, as, like all other plants at this time of year, the weeds are growing rapidly. If the weeds have gone to seed, do not put the plants in the compost.
- Enjoy New South Wales Christmas bush (look out for the cultivar Albury's Red).

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