

SPRING GARDENING TASKS

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the gardens at HCP
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Spring Tasks

Pruning
Weeding
Dividing Perennials
Transplanting & Planting
Checking ties and stakes
Pest Control
Seed Starting



Pruning

Wander, ponder and prune



What to prune when

- The basic rule is knowing when the shrub or tree flowers
- Spring flowering shrubs like Forsythia, Ceanothus, Kerria, Viburnum and Lilac all flower on old wood; prune after flowering.
- Summer blooming shrubs which bloom on new wood can be pruned now
- Deciduous trees can be pruned while still dormant, before the sap starts to flow and when branching structure is visible. This is the time to open up the canopy to allow in more light and better air flow.
- Fruit trees can be pruned while dormant as well as a lighter summer pruning
- Best time for renovation pruning and coppicing to promote strong, new growth

Pruning Roses

- Prune in March, remove crossing branches and cut back old canes to the bottom
- Reduce the size by a third to a half
- Cut back to a strong outward facing bud
- Prune climbers, cutting laterals back to main canes



Cutting back perennials – early Spring







Cutting Back Perennials

- Cut stems back before new growth starts
- Cut back close to the base of the plant
- Tidy up and remove old leaves
- Leaving old stems in place all winter provides winter interest, habitat for wildlife and protection from cold temperatures



Dividing Perennials

- The general rule is to divide Spring blooming perennials after flowering
- Divide Summer blooming perennials in the Spring or after blooming (Fall)
- Fall blooming bulbs like Nerine and Colchicum (Fall Crocus)are divided in Spring



Spring division

- By dividing plants, you control plant size, rejuvenate growth and increase quantities
- Simply dig out the clump, shake off excess soil and wash clean
- Some can be pulled apart, while those with a large root mass will require a sharp knife, saw or 2 garden forks inserted into the crown back to back



Transplanting & Planting

- Transplant trees and shrubs during the dormant season
- Determine the extent of the root system, keep as much of the root ball intact as possible and have new area prepared
- Lift and replant immediately
- Replant to the correct planting depth, stake if necessary
- Water and mulch area

Spring Planting

- Assuming your soil is workable, March is the beginning of the planting season!
- The moderate weather helps reduce transplant shock.
- The warming soil and Spring rains are ideal to promote root growth
- Nurseries carry bare root trees and roses this time of year
- If planting a potted specimen, loosen up the root ball

Additional Spring Tasks

- As temperatures start to rise, so do the weeds!
- Weeding now significantly reduces the number of weeds later on
- Bulbs are popping up, be careful not to step on emerging plants such as lilies etc.
- Start your spring clean up, check tree ties and stakes



Rabbits and slugs

- Slugs can cause damage this time of year, a rough surface of crushed shells, wool pellets and organic slug bait protects vulnerable plants especially seedlings

- Place rabbit guards around plants, chicken wire several inches below the ground and 3 feet high

- Natural repellants; bloodmeal and garlic spray



Don’t forget

- Mulch garden beds
- Remove old Hellebore foliage to prevent Leaf Spot
- Re-pot and root prune container grown trees and shrubs
- Prune back Hardy Fuchsias to 6-8 inches
- Lime your lawn
- Turn compost
- Top dress beds with compost





Mason Bees

- Our native bee, Osmia lignaria, the Mason Bee or Blue Orchard Bee is a small solitary bee which lives in thin reeds or holes left behind by other insects.
- They are typically non-stinging, do not produce honey, do not have a queen or live in a hive or swarm, making them easy and fun to watch.
- The mason bee emerges in the Spring when daytime temperatures rise to 10C consistently.This coincides with fruit tree bloom.
- Mason bees are amazing pollinators, generally pollinating about 95% of the flowers they visit.Installing a solitary bee nest will provide a safe environment for them to lay their eggs.
- One nest has the potential to yield 100 new bees.





Pollinators

- Pollinators are needed in ecosystems so that plants can produce seeds and fruit.
- About 90% of all plants need or benefit from pollinators.
- We have a native bee project funded by the Victoria Master Gardeners Association and created in collaboration with the HCP to preserve and protect native bees in the gardens through education, habitat preservation and creation.
- For more information visit Island Pollinator Initiative:
- https://islandpollinatorinitiative.ca/



Seed Starting - Basics

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Light



- All seedlings need proper light immediately following germination.
- A south-facing window or grow lights to provide 12-14 hours of light each day.
- Good light is essential for raising stocky, vigorous seedlings; inadequate light results in tall, spindly seedlings.





Containers

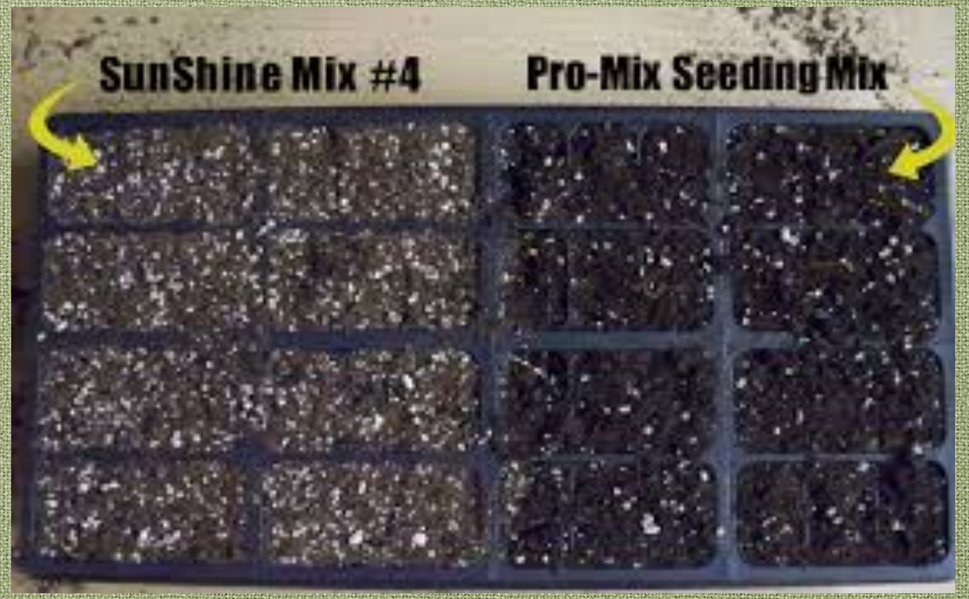


- Seeds will germinate in a wide variety of containers; make sure they are clean and have drainage holes.
- Seedling flats, cell packs, peat pots and peat pellets work well.
- If using last year's cell packs/pots, sterilize them by cleaning with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water). Air dry before using.





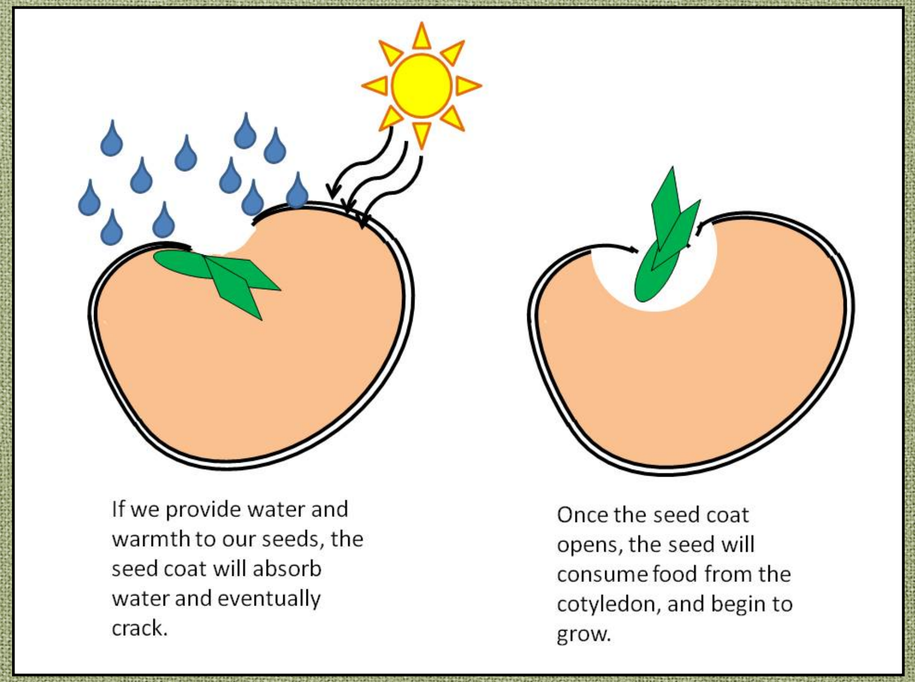
Seed Starting Mix



- Any sterilized soilless seed-starting mixture like Sunshine Mix is ideal for seeding and transplanting.
- Do not use garden soil -- it is too heavy, contains weed seeds and possibly overwintering insects and disease spores.
- You can easily make your own mix, combine 1 part perlite or vermiculite and 1 part peat moss. Dampen the mix before seeding.



Moisture



- Germination is all about water!
- In order for plant cells to start multiplying, the dried seed must absorb several times its volume of water, causing the embryo to enlarge and the seed coat to burst open.

Protection

- Some seed trays come with plastic transparent domes that allow light in while keeping the soil moist.
- Plastic wrap or a plastic bag also act as a mini-greenhouse. Monitor daily to maintain even moisture and onset of disease. Mould and fungus can grow due to excessive moisture; remove the plastic cover and let your seedlings breathe.







Seed Packets

- Read before you plant! Seed packets contain a wealth of information:
  - Growing requirements (sun/shade, soil moisture/heat tolerance)
  - Height at maturity
  - Days to harvest
  - Sowing recommendations (indoors/outdoors, warm vs. cold)
  - Germination specifics (planting depth/days to germination)
  - Spacing and thinning advice



Temperature

- Germination temperatures listed on seed packets refer to soil temperatures, NOT air temperatures.
- Most seeds require between 21-24° C (70-75° F) to germinate.
- Provide bottom heat –heating mat, top of the refrigerator, propagation table.
- Once seeds have germinated, get them under a grow light or near a bright window.
- Start seeds warm, grow seedlings cool.





Questions?



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