

Gardening Calendar for April

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We are moving into the summer gardening season. That does not mean that we don't occasionally have a freeze in April, but it is unusual. The last average freeze date is just before the middle of March. Unless unusual weather is forecast plan on taking advantage of the warmer weather.

Move the cold sensitive plants such as bougainvillea, hibiscus and plumeria out of the shelter. Fertilize them with Osmocote and prune off the dead wood.

In the flower garden the snapdragons, pansies, dianthus, cyclamen, and other cool weather annuals will bloom strongly for the month unless they were wiped out in last winter's freezes or hot weather in March. If there is space in the full sun portion of the cut flower or regular flower garden, plant zinnias. Dreamland and other transplants are available at area nurseries or you can plant seeds. My favorite selections are Cactus and California Giants. The blooms are large and colorful for cut flowers and to serve as a nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds. If you let them reseed the seed-eating birds such as lesser goldfinches and cardinals will feed on the seed. They will eat much of the seed but some of it will sprout for the second zinnia crop for the garden.

For more colorful heat-loving seed producing blooms, obtain and plant a patch of Annual Sunflower in full sun. They will naturalize like other wildflowers and support butterflies and seed-eating birds.

The other wildflowers including bluebonnets, blue curl, poppies and coreopsis will be ending their bloom period this month. It is sometimes tough to tolerate the wildflower "ugly period" but if the plants are not allowed to mature and drop their seed, there won't be future blooms.

In the vegetable garden plant, any of your remaining potted up tomatoes in the garden. If you have nematodes seek out the nematode resistant varieties at your favorite nursery. Celebrity, Tycoon, BHN 968 and Valley Cat are nematode resistant. We have the most success with tomatoes that are "determinate", they grow quickly to full size and then concentrate on producing and maturing their fruit before the hot weather arrives. Try the "Rodeo Tomato" for 2019, HM 8849 for a determinate producer of large fruit. It should make a good container tomato. Use Ruby Crush for a sweet tasting determinate cherry tomato in the garden or a container.

April is also a good time to place pepper and eggplant transplants in the garden Early in the month plant green beans, summer squash, cucumber, and cantaloupe by seed. Plant okra seed later in the month.

The lawn should do some serious growing in April. Mow St Augustine at 3 inches, Bermuda grass at 1.5 inches, zoysia grass at 2 inches and buffalo grass at 5 inches tall. Mow every week so that you never remove more than one-third of the leaf. After you mow real grass (not weeds) twice fertilize the grass with slow-release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9. Follow label instructions.