

WHAT TO DO THIS MONTH IN THE GARDEN

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Note: These garden task suggestions were printed some years ago in the annual TGOA/MGCA calendars. Thanks to Walter Starcher, MGC Akron member and past president, for providing the combined list.

January

1. Plan the rotation of crops to insure more healthy, productive, and disease resistant plants.
2. It is easy to read a rain gauge if you put a few drops of food coloring in the tube. Even if the colored water dries up, there is enough residue to help read the next rainfall.
3. Winter the best time for pruning, especially oaks and elms, which are at a greater risk for vascular diseases if pruned in the summer.
4. Place catalog orders for vegetable and flower seeds in January to make sure they arrive in plenty of time for planting.
5. Prune fruit and shade trees during winter. Check with your local garden center for proper pruning methods and for those varieties that should not be pruned in winter, such as maples.
6. Apply dormant oil spray now. It will eliminate over-wintering pests on fruit and ornamental trees. Spray when temperatures are above 45 degrees F. for eight hours. It can be applied anytime until the buds begin to swell.

February

1. Store seed packets of spinach and lettuce in a cool place. Move these to the freezer two weeks before planting. Wrapping them in freezer bags may prevent them drying out in a frost-free freezer.
2. Mark your calendar for flower shows. At flower shows you meet people with like interests, see different varieties, and enjoy the beauty and pleasure of flowers.
3. Because February is light on yard work, it is a great time to work your imagination and plan some landscape changes.
4. Order trees for spring planting.
5. Have your soil tested.
6. Cut branches from Forsythia, Quince, Spiraea, flowering Almond, and Pussy Willow to force into bloom. Keep them in a cool room and mist frequently.
7. Birds appreciate your keeping a full feeder, but they will be more grateful for suet.

March

1. Lime parts of the garden where you need to bring up the PH. This should not be done at the same time as the application of manure.
2. Do not be hasty in removing mulch around your plants. Winter-kill often occurs when warm days are followed by cold nights.
3. Wood ashes from fireplace or wood-burning stove may be put in the garden or compost bin. Ashes contain up to 25% potash. Use at the rate one-half cup per square yard. Ashes from burned paper are considered less beneficial.
4. Aerify your lawn in the spring or fall. This depends upon what type of turfgrass you have.

April

1. Have a certified tree technician spray your shade trees with a fungicide to prevent leaf disease.
2. This is the best time to plant most trees in northern Ohio. Most root growth occurs in the spring and fall.
3. Scratch a bar of soap before going into the garden to work. Dirt under the fingernails then washes out easily.
4. Mount a mailbox on a post in the garden to store small tools.
5. As you watch your spring flowers fade, remember that it is important to leave the foliage of bulbs to ripen and die back.
6. Here are some important flowers to attract butterflies to the garden: bee balm, cosmos, morning glory, phlox, aster, verbena, zinnia, cornflower, and thistle.
7. A mouse trap attached to the wall of a tool shed can be a glove trap. Gloves hung there will dry quickly and can be easily found.

May

1. Fertilize roses in May. Watch for signs of mildew and black spot on the leaves.
2. Mow cool season lawns tall (2.5-3") through the summer months for a healthier lawn.
3. Plants and trees that attract hummingbirds: clematis, delphinium, pinks, sweet william, day lily, trumpet vine, bee balm, columbine, mimosa, lobelia, salvia, snapdragon, red cardinal flower, and cleome.
4. Bugs and diseases will be out in force now. Check plants thoroughly each week to avoid surprise epidemics. Take samples of problems to your local garden center for advice.
5. Adult Japanese beetles alone feed on about 275 different plants. Some of their favorites are linden, sassafras, elm, and birch. Aphids, spider mites, bagworms and many other insects can cause severe damage if left unchecked. Inspect and treat trees for harmful insects. Now is the time many destructive insects are most vulnerable to pesticides. Look for splotchy discolored or chewed up leaves, and take action at the first sign.

June

1. The best time to water a lawn is early morning. This allows much of the water to soak and the remainder to evaporate during the day. If your lawn has a disease problem, do not water in the evening no matter how convenient it may seem. Excess moisture does not evaporate, providing the perfect environment for fungal growth.
2. Do not apply mulch to any plants until the hot summer months because mulch will not allow the soil to heat up.
3. Weeds are plants out of place. Remove them before they go to seed and you can put them on your compost pile.
4. Remove spent blossoms from annual and perennial flowers every few days if possible. This prevents formation of seeds and allows the plant's energy to be used for growth and future flowering.

July

1. Work compost or animal manure into the soil. Organic matter holds water like a sponge and soil doesn't dry out as fast.
2. Water early in the morning. It is best to provide a slow deep watering. Water the soil, not the leaves, to reduce the amount of water lost to evaporation and to discourage diseases.
3. Home canning is one way gardeners are saving money and preserving the rich garden flavor of the healthy home harvest.
4. Be sure to fertilize hanging baskets, planters, and containers on a regular schedule during summer months to maintain vigorous and healthy plants.
5. Avoid blossom end rot in tomatoes, caused by fluctuating water supply. Deep root water every 7-10 days. Apply organic mulch.
6. If July is hot and dry, make sure your plants and trees get the water they need, especially newly planted trees and shrubs, Two inches of water each week is a good rule to follow. To test, place a coffee can or similar container near your target and see how long it takes to fill it with two inches. The next time set your timer. For trees, a slow, deep watering is best because it helps establish a deeper root system.

August

1. *To estimate the age of a tree: multiply the tree's diameter in inches X species growth factor:

Red Maple: 4.5	White Oak: 5.0
Silver Maple: 3.0	Red Oak: 4.0
Sugar Maple: 5.0	Pin Oak: 3.0
River Birch: 3.5	Basswood: 3.0
White Birch 5.0	American Elm 4.0
Green Ash 4.0	Ironwood 7.0
Black Walnut 4.5	Cottonwood 2.0
Black Cherry 5.0	Dogwood 7.0
Aspen 2.0	Redbud 7.0
Shagbark Hickory 7.5	

*Note: Factors from International Society of Arboriculture.
2. Roses should not be fed after the middle of August. If the roses are left to mature into rose hips, the overall health of the plant will be improved..
3. If your perennial beds are dull and dreary, take a Sunday drive around town for ideas on next year's August garden.

September

1. Bring in your indoor plants before the heat is turned on. Check for insects and take necessary steps if you find them. Someone we know once brought an active mouse nest into the house in a houseplant pot.
2. Power rake and overseed a thin lawn now. Weeds will not be a problem in the fall.
3. It's hard to see a favorite tree taken down, but when it becomes a hazard to people and property, then a charming asset could become a dangerous liability. Nesting holes, dead limbs, trunk decay, a poor root system – these are all signs of a potentially dangerous tree.

October

1. In the fall deciduous trees turn carbohydrates in their leaves into sugars and move them into twigs, buds, and down into their roots for storage. Leaf cells then break down, starting with the chloroplasts that contain green pigment chlorophyll. This process reveals the yellows, reds, and oranges that were present all along in the leaves, but were hidden under green. The trees will use the stored sugar to fuel spring growth. While you enjoy the beauty of autumn's colors, plant some bulbs to enjoy next spring.
2. CLEAN UP – Remove dead plant material from your garden and flower beds to prevent overwintering disease and insects. Put the healthy refuse into the compost bin.
3. Empty out hoses, sprayers, and other equipment. Don't store aerosol or liquid chemicals in a place where they might freeze.
4. Plan on paper next year's garden, while ideas are fresh in your mind.

November

1. Mulch your perennials and roses this month, utilizing straw, hay, leaves, and compost. Wait until the ground is frozen.
2. November is a month for relaxing, enjoying a good garden book, or visiting your local garden center for fun and enjoyment.
3. Deep root water trees and shrubs to ensure an adequate water supply before the ground freezes.
4. Summer annuals wintering inside may need some pruning this month. Root the clippings in vermiculite or sand for great Christmas gifts.
5. Plants that are hardy for your area need no special treatment. Some plants, including rhododendrons, azaleas, and pyracantha, might need some protection. Any plans to cover sensitive shrubs in protective burlap should be carried out after the first hard frost. The same goes for other windbreak materials such as baskets, wooden crates, and snow fencing. Order seed and nursery catalogs now or be sure they arrive in time to place your January order.

December

1. As part of your holiday giving list, consider sharing your gardening enjoyment by including tools, books, gloves, and magazines.
2. After purchasing your Christmas tree, trim two inches off the trunk before placing it into warm water and preservative. Check water level daily.
3. Cooler temperatures and shorter days mean slower growth for indoor plants. Avoid over-watering at this time; water according to the plant's needs.
4. Water trees and shrubs if this month is dry, to prevent winter kill, especially on south facing slopes.
5. Christmas poinsettias like a warm bright window during the day and cool nights. Keep uniformly moist at all times.
6. Place a good layer of mulch around plants, 2 to 4 inches deep, to help insulate roots, minimize water loss, and lessen the chances of damage caused by freezing and thawing. It's important not to mulch up against the trunk, or rodents might make their nests in there and feed on the bark all winter,