

April's Timely Tips from Thompson and Morgan

In the flower garden

Plant lily bulbs now in pots! If you want to get ahead with your summer lily display, start planting now! I'd always recommend planting in pots. You can simply move them around the patio or into gaps in your borders as they come into flower! Use a good, multi-purpose compost and half-fill a container at least 30cm (12") in diameter and is sufficient for 3 bulbs. Cover with more compost and water in. Once the plants begin to shoot, move them to a sunny position. Feed with a liquid plant feed each weekly from the beginning of summer.



Dig in compost or manure to prepare for the growing season

Dig in a 5cm (or more) layer of compost or well rotted manure into your beds to prepare for the growing season. You can also work in a general purpose fertiliser such as pelleted chicken manure or fish, blood and bone.

Apply a layer of **mulch** around your perennials, trees and shrubs before the hot weather arrives. Use organic matter such as well rotted manure.

Lift and divide perennial plants now to improve their vigour and create new plants for your garden.

Divide hostas before they come into leaf.

Divide Primroses they have finished flowering.

You can start to move **evergreen shrubs and trees** now provided the soil isn't frozen or waterlogged.

Plant summer-flowering bulbs such as Lilies into beds, borders and containers.



Apply a balanced slow release fertiliser to trees, shrubs and hedges

Feed trees, shrubs and hedges with a balanced slow release fertiliser by lightly forking it into the soil surface. Roses are greedy plants and will greatly benefit from feeding as they come into growth.

Forced flower bulbs such as hyacinths and daffodils, which have now finished flowering, can be planted outdoors in garden borders..

Hardwood cuttings taken last year may need planting or potting on now.

If any of your garden plants will need supporting this year, put the **supports** in now so the plants grow up through them. Adding supports afterwards is difficult and may damage the plant.



Tie in climbing and rambling roses to their supports

Tie in **climbing and rambling roses** to their supports.

Honeysuckle and Clematis will now be putting on growth, tie in new stems to train the plant along its support.

Check and tree ties to make sure the tie is not cutting into the trunk. Loosen any that are tight to allow the trunk room to expand.

Prune your Penstemons now - cut all the old shoots back to the base provided there is new growth at the bottom of the plant. If there are no new shoots at the base, cut just above the lowest set of leaves.

If you haven't done so already, finish cutting back any **dead foliage** left on your perennials and ornamental grasses to make way for new growth.

Prune **Forsythia** as soon as they have finished flowering, cutting back to strong young shoots.

Trim **winter-flowering heathers** as the flowers disappear, to prevent the plants becoming leggy.

Continue to remove any faded flowers from your **winter pansies** to stop them setting seed. This will encourage flushes of new flowers throughout the spring.

Deadhead **daffodils** and **tulips** as the flowers finish but leave the foliage intact allowing it to die back naturally.

Direct sow hardy outside or in pots or modules.

Check that your **container plants** are not drying out - warm weather will quickly affect soil moisture levels.

In the vegetable garden

Dig in a 5cm (or more) layer of compost, well rotted manure or green waste into your beds to prepare for the growing season.



Growing potatoes in grow bags - top up compost as the plants grow

Plant your **chitted potatoes** outside in the ground or in potato grow bags.

For quick and easy **pea supports** push some twiggy sticks around your pea plants now.

Thin your carrot **seedlings** to achieve good-size carrots - do this in the evening when fewer carrot flies are around.



Many crops can be directly sown in the ground

Many crops can be direct sown into the ground now including parsnips, cabbages, and radishes.

Prepare **vegetable seed beds** by removing all weeds and forking in plenty of compost. Cover prepared soil with sheets of black plastic to keep it drier and warmer in preparation for planting.

Build **raised beds** to take the bending out of growing vegetables.

Looking after your lawn

Sow **lawn seed** now on well prepared soil and keep the soil moist whilst the seed is germinating.

For an instant lawn, **lay new turf** now and ensure it is kept moist until established.

Repair any **bare patches** in your lawn.

Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn now for a boost to the start of the season.

Now is a good time to apply specialist **lawn weed killers** to your lawn where moss and weeds are a problem.

On dry days, brush away any **worm casts** on the lawn.

Mow your lawn more regularly as required, mower blades can be lowered towards the end of the month.

Recut **lawn edges** to straighten them up. Try installing lawn edging to make future maintenance easier.

Aerate compacted areas of lawn by spiking it with a garden fork.

Other jobs about the garden

Check your **compost bins** to see if there is any compost ready to use.

Improve the drainage of **heavy soils** by incorporating plenty of organic matter.

Top up raised beds with compost and good quality topsoil.

Top-dress containers with fresh compost. If containers are full, remove the top 5cm of old compost and replace with new.

Keep on top of **weeding** now the weather is warming up. Run a hoe through beds and borders. Apply weed killer to perennial weeds in paving and patios.

Look out for signs of **pests and diseases**, early prevention is easier than curing an infestation.

Remove dirt from your **paths and paving** before summer arrives. Use a pressure washer or special patio cleaner.

Buy **fresh potting compost** from your local garden centre and store it in a cool dry place in preparation for the season ahead.

Water butts are a worthwhile investment for the season ahead. Position them under a downpipe to make the most of rainfall.

Make sure **bird baths** and **bird feeders** are kept topped up to encourage birds to your garden.

From your armchair

Use a **diary** to keep track of which seeds you are sowing and when they were sown and planted out - it really helps later in the year.

Keep an eye on your **houseplants** - the warmer weather and longer light hours will encourage them to grow and they may require more water.