

SPRING IS IN THE AIR: GARDEN TIPS FOR A NEW SEASON

By Betsy Ginsburg

Time in spring accelerates like a sports car, as the garden transforms itself in a few weeks from blankness to abundance. Of course, that transformation does not happen without a lot of help from the gardener. The following are a few tips to get the garden growing:

- **Clean up the mess:** Rake out debris from beds and borders and compost everything organic, if possible. Rake carefully, so as not to dislodge emerging seedlings.
- **Deadhead the Daffs:** As daffodils, tulips and other spring bloomers fade, clip off the dead flowerheads. Leave the foliage on the plants until it begins to turn yellow-brown. This allows leaves to photosynthesize, storing energy for next year's flowers.
- **Check the weather:** Most houseplants can go outside in protected places on the porch, deck or even in the garden as soon as night temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Ready, Set, Soil:** The soil is ready to plant when it feels like chocolate cake—slightly warm, moist and crumbly. Transplants, including most vegetables, herbs and bedding flowers can go in after the last frost date has passed, as can direct-sown annuals like nasturtiums and zinnias. To find the last frost dates for New Jersey and elsewhere are at the NOAA Satellite Information Service website at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/climate normals/clim20suppl/states/NJ.pdf>
- **Prune It:** Remove dead wood from spring flowering shrubs, but leave serious pruning until after the flowers have faded. Prune roses now, removing dead, weak (narrower than a standard pencil) and crossed branches. Shape evergreens and remove any branches damaged by winter winds.
- **Move It:** If possible rotate vegetable crops, a practice that restores nutrients to the soil. Once transplants are in the ground, mulch around them with layers of newspaper and organic mulch or landscape fabric. This helps retain soil moisture and keeps down weeds.
- **Multiply by Dividing:** As hostas, daylilies, spiderwort and other clump-forming plants emerge from the ground, divide large clumps. Regular division (every three years) keeps such plants healthy and provides an abundant supply of young plants to give away or use elsewhere in the garden.
- **Weed Religiously:** Grub out weeds when they are still young, making sure to get the roots. Weeds removed early do not have time to flower, set seed and produce offspring that will trouble you this season and next.