

Seasonal Calendar



Natural gardens work with nature to keep plants healthy without a lot of maintenance.

A little effort at the right time can prevent problems and minimize work. Use this seasonal gardening calendar to keep your garden healthy and trouble-free. For further information, check out Bellevue's Natural Gardening Guides and the resources listed on the back of this guide.

Get out and appreciate your garden in every season. Watch for emerging problems—and how nature takes care of most of them before you get around to it. If serious problems arise, call the Garden Hotline at 206-633-0224 for help identifying pests and non-toxic controls.



Spring

MARCH–MAY

Lawns

- **Mow high—and let the clippings lie.**

Try "grasscycling": leave grass clippings on the lawn to save time and fertilize the lawn for free! Cut most lawns 2-3 inches high to feed deep roots, hide clippings, and shade out weeds. Cut bentgrass lawns 1 to 1-1/2 inches high.

- **Renovate unhealthy lawns.** Improve poor soil and thin turf by core aerating, overseeding, and top-dressing with 1/4 inch of compost. See the *Lawns* guide.
- **Fertilize in May, if needed.** Use a natural organic or slow-release fertilizer. They release nutrients slowly, won't leach away, and support a variety of soil organisms that improve fertility and combat diseases.
- **Avoid weed and feed products.** Mow or pull weeds before they go to seed.

Trees and Shrubs

- **Plant early.** Plant while it is still cool and wet so plants can grow strong roots before the stresses of summer heat and dryness. Mix compost into the soil and mulch large areas around new plants (not just planting holes) to hold water and nourish roots.
- **Mulch early.** Spread 2-3 inches of coarse ground bark or wood chips to smother weeds, feed plants, and reduce water needs all summer long. See the *Mulch* guide.

Flower and Vegetable Gardens

- **Add compost to beds.** Mix 2-3 inches into new beds, or an inch before replanting old ones.
- **Get weeds under control.** Remove weeds before they go to seed or develop deep roots. A little weeding now can head off a lot more all summer.
- **Plant the best varieties.** Look for hardy, pest- and disease-resistant varieties for trouble free gardening. Many local nurseries and seed catalogues highlight the best varieties.



Watering

- **Ready, set.... Test sprinklers and hoses** to make sure they are ready to go when the sun comes out. Call contractors to make repairs before they get too busy.
- **Soak 'em.** Lay soaker hoses or drip lines on garden beds. You'll use less water and plants will be healthier, with fewer weeds and diseases. Cover them with mulch for more savings and less work. See the *Drip and Soak* guide.

Composting

- **Harvest time!** Compost made last summer should be ready to use for spring planting and mulching.

Summer

JUNE–AUGUST



Lawns

- **Keep mowing.** Leaving the clippings on the lawn works best in dry weather. So try "grasscycling" again if wet clumps stopped you in spring.
- **Sharpen mower blades.** Sharp blades keep the lawn greener and help prevent disease.
- **Let some lawn go golden brown?** Save loads of water and money by letting lawn areas go dormant until fall. If brown gets you down, keep the most visible areas green. See the *Lawn* guide for more information.

Trees and Shrubs

- **Still time to mulch!** Spread 2-3 inches of wood chips or bark on shrub beds to conserve water, smother weeds, and feed plants.

Flower and Vegetable Gardens

- **Best time to mulch annual beds.** Now that the soil is warm, mulch beds with an inch of compost to conserve water, feed plants, and smother weeds.
- **Friend or foe?** Identify bugs before you spray, squash, or stomp—most are "good guys" who eat pests. See the *Pests, Weeds, and Diseases* guide and use the *Resources* on the back page to identify pests and non-toxic controls.



- **Plant for winter!** Plant carrots, lettuce, broccoli, kale, beets, and other vegetables mid-summer to eat in fall and winter. Check the *Resources* section to find out what and when to plant.



Watering

- **Look before (and after) you water.** Let the soil and plants guide watering. Let the soil surface dry an inch or so deep before watering. After watering, make sure water has reached roots several inches deep. Learn which plants thrive with little or no summer water, and don't water them unless they show stress.
- **Water early—but not often.** Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation. Let the soil surface dry before watering again so roots can breathe.
- **Look for leaks.** Watch watering systems in action every few weeks to find and fix problems. See the *Watering* guide for more tips.

Composting

- **Feed and water.** Add yard trimmings to compost piles, and check to make sure they stay moist. Mix and moisten dry materials, then cover with plastic or soil to keep it all damp.

Fall

SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER



Lawns

- **Fall is for fertilizing.** September is the best time to fertilize lawns for strong roots. Use natural organic or slow-release fertilizer that rain won't wash away. See the *Fertilizing* guide. Fall is also a good time to test the soil and add lime, if needed.
- **Renovate and reseed.** Improve poor soil and thin lawns by core aerating, reseeding, and top-dressing with 1/4 inch of compost before October 15th.
- **Plant new lawns.** Lawns seeded by early October will grow strong roots to survive next summer's hot and dry weather with less water.



Trees and Shrubs

- **Mulch now.** Spread wood chips, ground bark, or fall leaves to smother weeds, feed plants, and protect the soil from compaction and erosion.
- **Fall is for planting.** Plant trees and shrubs in September and October while soil is still warm so they grow strong roots and are prepared for next summer's dry spell. See the *Plant Right* guide.

Flower and Vegetable Gardens

- **Clean up!** Remove old plants to get rid of weed seeds, disease spores, and hiding places for slugs.
- **Plant for spring.** Fall is the best time to plant hardy flowering bulbs for spring color. They grow in the wet winter and spring months and naturally become dormant during dry summer months—thriving without irrigation.
- **Pile it on!** Spread autumn leaves, manure, or compost on empty garden beds to smother weeds and enrich soil for spring crops. Or plant cover crops like annual rye grass and clover.

Watering

- **"Cut it out...stop it!"** Reduce watering of lawns and established plants by half in early September, and stop when the first soaking rains fall.
- **Shut off and drain systems before cold weather.** Put away exposed soaker hoses, or cover with mulch if left out.

Composting

- **Feed your pile.** Clear out annual garden growth and mix with autumn leaves to make compost for spring. See the *Composting Yard Trimmings* guide.
- **Take cover.** Cover moist piles with plastic to keep rain from making them soggy and washing out nutrients.



Winter

DECEMBER-FEBRUARY

Lawns

- **Tune-up time.** Service mowers and sharpen blades.

Trees and Shrubs

- **Prune.** Prune most fruit and other trees and shrubs while they're dormant.
- **Plant bare!** "Bare root" trees and shrubs are inexpensive, easy to plant, and quick to establish. The best selection of fruit trees and bushes, and many ornamentals, are available bare root.

Flower and Vegetable Gardens

- **Weed, again?** A late winter clean up can remove annual weeds before they go to seed and save a lot of work later.
- **Clean up, again?** Cut back perennials to make room for new growth.

Watering

- **Let it rain...**and think about watering system repairs and upgrades, including using soaker hoses or drip irrigation to slash water use.

Storage Areas

- **Check for old and unwanted pesticides.** Call the Household Hazards Line at 206-296-4692 or visit www.HazWasteHelp.org for information on safe disposal.

Get Ready for Spring

- **Make plans for next year's natural garden now.** Check out the *Garden Design*, *Soil and Lawn Alternatives* guides, and the *Resources* that follow.





RESOURCES

Books

These books are available at local libraries, bookstores, and some nurseries.

Composting

- *Let It Rot*, by Stu Campbell
- *Worms Eat My Garbage*, by Mary Appelhof

Pest Identification and Management

- *Sunset Western Garden Problem Solver*

Planning and Plants

- *Sunset Western Garden Book*
- *The Pacific Northwest Gardeners Book of Lists*, by Ray and Jan McNeilan
- *Ann Lovejoy's Organic Garden Design School*
- *The Ann Lovejoy Handbook of Northwest Gardening*
- *The New Low-Maintenance Garden*, by Valerie Easton

Shrubs and Trees

- *Pruning*, by Christopher Brickell

Vegetable and Flower Gardens

- *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades*, by Steve Solomon
- *The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide*, by Seattle Tilth

Watering

- *Sunset Sprinklers and Drip Systems: The Right System for Your Yard, Step-by-Step Sprinkler Installation, Building Effective Drip Systems*

Demonstration Gardens

- King County Master Gardener Lake Hills Greenbelt Urban Demonstration Garden at 15500 SE 16th Street, Bellevue
- The Waterwise Garden and other gardens at Bellevue Botanical Garden, 12001 Main Street, Bellevue. www.bellevuebotanical.org

Bellevue's Natural Lawn and Garden website

www.bellevuewa.gov/naturallyardcare.htm

Bellevue's Natural Gardening Guides

Composting Food Scraps • *Composting Yard Trimmings*
• *Drip and Soak* • *Fertilizer* • *Garden Design* • *Lawn Alternatives* • *Lawns* • *Mulch* • *Pests, Weeds, and Diseases*
• *Plant Right* • *Seasonal Calendar* • *Soil* • *Watering*

For copies, visit Bellevue's Natural Lawn and Garden website (above) or call Bellevue Utilities at 425-452-6932.

Natural Yard Care Neighborhoods

www.naturallyardcare.info

The Garden Hotline

www.gardenhotline.org or 206-633-0224

WSU King County Extension Resources

<http://extension.wsu.edu/king/gardening>

Local Hazardous Waste Management Program

www.HazWasteHelp.org

Household Hazards Line

206-296-4692

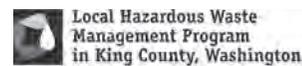
Cascade Water Alliance

www.cascadewater.org

Call Before You Dig

Free service to mark underground utility lines.
1-800-424-5555 or www.callbeforeyoudig.org

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