

Spring Around The Corner? Get Your Garden Ready!

Even while many parts of the country are still under a blanket of snow (with more in the forecast!) the calendar tells us that spring is in fact, on the way.

It's easy to forget how close it is, but for everyone hoping to put in a garden this spring, there are some things you can do to get your garden ready for the warmer days of spring.

As you are waiting for the last of the snow to melt away, you can start thinking about what plants you will grow. It's important that the plants you choose can grow successfully in the climate you live in. Don't assume that just because your local nursery sells a certain type of plant or flower that it will grow in your climate. You can consult a USDA zone map to find out what zone you live in, and then use books or websites about flowers and plants to find out which zones each variety grows best in. Many gardeners end up with problems with pests or having to use chemicals to get their plants to grow- and it could be that the wrong type of flowers were planted for the climate.

In addition to the climate conditions, you'll also need to consider the type of sunlight your garden area receives and how much light the plant varieties you are selecting require to grow. Sunflowers need full sun most of the day, and will not grow in areas that are shady. Your local nursery can help you select plants depending on how much sun the area receives, or you can consult a book about plants as this information is generally included.

Once the snow melts, and the danger of cold, frosty nights has passed, you can begin to prepare the soil for planting. Soil preparation begins with testing your soil to find out what pH level your soil is, as well as how much of various nutrients are in the soil, including phosphorus, nitrogen, calcium, potassium and magnesium. You should test your soil before beginning a garden; and then every three years after planting the garden. There are many facilities that will test the soil for you, including many local universities. You just put some soil into a sealed plastic bag, label it and send to the testing service.

The health of your soil depends on the drainage. Root growth is effected by soil with poor drainage, and the absorption of nutrients by the plants is greatly effected by too much or too little drainage. You can test your drainage ability with a simple, do-it-yourself test. Dig a hole about six inches across and twelve inches deep. Put water in the hole and let it drain. Once the water has drained, fill it again and time how long it will take the water to completely drain out of the hole. If it takes more than eight hours, you have a problem with your drainage that will affect the growth of plants.

About the Author

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