



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

School Garden Yearly Maintenance Schedule Created by the Friends of the National Arboretum

January

Annual Plants

- Make sure garlic is mulched.
- If overwintering carrots or greens, inspect row cover to ensure it hasn't blown away or gotten too tattered.

Pollinator Garden

- Keep the area looking tidy but leave fallen leaves and last season's growth as overwintering habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Herb Garden

- Keep the area looking tidy but leave fallen leaves and last season's growth as overwintering habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Compost

- Tidy up compost area by removing any trash from compost area.
- Figure out which piles are active, whether or not they should be combined, and develop a plan for where spring weeds and fall leaves will be added and stored.

Fruit trees

- Make sure young tree roots are protected with a thick layer of mulch at the base of the trees.

General

- Develop planting schedule, including succession plantings and which tasks will be done by students and which will be done by staff.
- Develop a seed starting schedule.
- Gather materials for starting seeds (trays, lights, timers, soil, seeds).
- Pick up trash and tidy materials.

February

Annual Plants

- Start seedlings (spring and early summer plantings).
- Plant spinach (week 3 or 4).

Pollinator Garden

- Prune and weed.
- Re-establish border.

Herb Garden

- Prune and weed.

Compost

- Turn active pile twice throughout the month and add water if not as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

Fruit trees

- [Prune](#), especially focusing on removing dead, diseased, broken, and rubbing limbs.
- In general, cut back growth by a third.

General

- Create new garden signs.

March

Annual Plants

- Plant peas (starting week 1).
- Plant rest of spring crops (starting week 3) and mulch around plants with straw.
- Cover brassicas (cabbage family) if you see cabbage moths.
- Add Sluggo if experiencing any slug damage.
- Start late summer seedlings.

Pollinator Garden

- Add compost around plants and mulch area.

Herb Garden

- Add compost around plants and mulch area.
- [Prune perennial herbs](#) once you see signs of new growth.

Compost

- Turn and water curing winter pile twice throughout the month. With (green) weeds and small (brown) pruned materials or dry leaves, begin new pile by mixing two parts brown material to one-part green material. Add some material from your active pile to new piles to inoculate them with the right microorganisms.
- If additional compost is needed for spring and summer plantings, which is likely, figure out where you'll get it from (WYG, DC Water's Bloom, or Veterans Compost are all good options!) and where you'll store it.

Fruit trees

- Ideally right before [bud break](#), weed around base of trees and [add fertilizer](#), compost, and mulch. This can also happen through May, but the earlier the better!

- Plant fruit trees late in the month.

General

- Pick up trash around garden.
- Gather materials you'll need for the season (bamboo and twine for trellises, row cover, straw for mulch and compost)
- Put out garden signs for different areas and spring plants.

April

Annual Plants

- Weed spring crops.
- [Side dress plants with](#) compost four weeks after planting (except loose leaf lettuce, radishes, and spinach).
- Step up summer seedlings into 4-inch pots.
- Keep crops watered with one inch of deep watering per plant per week.

Pollinator Garden

- Plant any new perennials and [water them with an inch of water](#) each week.
- Prune woody shrubs after their flowers have faded.

Herb Garden

- Plant new frost tolerant herbs (thyme, rosemary, lavender, oregano, cilantro, dill, parsley, sorrel).

Compost

- Keep piles as moist as a wrung-out sponge by watering and turning at least twice throughout the month.
- Sift finished compost from curing pile to be used in spring and summer plantings.

Fruit trees

- Make sure trees are receiving [about a gallon of water per week](#), either through watering or rain.

General

- Develop a plan for your summer garden maintenance and harvesting.
- Keep an eye out for diseases and pests. Act quickly for the best chance of beating them!

May

Annual Plants

- Plant early summer crops (first successions of nightshades and cucurbits).
- Make sure plants are all getting an inch of water per week.

- For younger plants and seeds, water at least twice a week for first few weeks, then convert to fewer, deeper waterings to encourage deeper root growth.
- Harvest loose leaf lettuce, salad mix, radishes, turnips, kale, collards, and mustards.
- Two to three weeks after planting tomatoes (or once they're at least 18 inches tall), [prune suckers](#) and lower leaves to increase airflow and reduce risk of infection.
- Set up trellises for tomatoes and peppers.
- Thin direct-seeded crops (like carrots, beets, radishes, turnips).
- Harvest [garlic scapes](#).
- [Mound](#) around potato plants to encourage greater tuber development.

Pollinator Garden

- Prune woody shrubs after their flowers have faded.
- Plant annual flowers or sow a pollinator mix in bare spots of pollinator garden.
- Water new plantings a few times a week (if no rain) until they are established.

Herb Garden

- Plant warm-season herbs (basil, stevia, chamomile, spilanthes).

Compost

- Keep piles as moist as a wrung-out sponge by watering and turning at least twice throughout the month.
- If pile is made up of about 2:1 brown to green ratio, stop adding new material once pile is at least 4 by 3 by 3 feet.
- Cut any debris into pieces no bigger than a few inches in order to encourage quick composting.

Fruit trees

- Early in the month, [thin fruit](#) that are touching or will touch if they grow to maturity.
- Keep providing deep watering of a full gallon of water per week, unless getting regular rainfall.
- Make sure area around trunk is mulched and weeded to the diameter of the dripline.

General

- Put out garden signs for summer plants.
- Do your best to get to spring weeds before they go to seed!

June

Annual Plants

- Plant last successions of summer crops. These should include the tomatoes, peppers, cucurbits, and corn you plan to harvest in the fall.
- Make sure established plants are receiving an inch of water over one or two waterings per week. Toward the end of the month, especially if temperatures are really high, water up to 2 inches.

- New plantings should get shallower, more regular watering until they are established.
- Side dress crops with compost or fertilizer four weeks after going in the ground.
- Continue to harvest leafy spring crops. Harvest head lettuce before it bolts. Covering with row cover, or growing in the shade of taller plants can help extend their season.
- Harvest leafy greens earlier in the day to avoid wilting and bitter taste.
- Continue pruning tomatoes, once they're 18 inches tall.
- [Harvest garlic](#) when one-third of the leaves have yellowed.

Pollinator Garden

- Keep area weeded and mulched.
- Make sure plants are receiving at least one inch of water per week.

Herb Garden

- Harvest cilantro before it bolts, unless you want to harvest seeds as coriander.
- Keep area weeded and mulched.
- Regularly harvesting most herbs, by cutting the stems, rather than pulling off their leaves will encourage them to become more leafy.

Compost

- Continue to add to active pile until it reaches 4 by 3 by 3 inches.
- Maintain moisture by watering and/or covering with cloth.
- Continue turning piles on a weekly basis.

Fruit trees

- [Keep trees watered](#), and prune any dead, diseased, or broken limbs.

General

- If you can tackle bermudagrass early in June, it'll make weeding a lot easier over the rest of the summer and fall.
- Harvest, especially greens early in the day for best flavor and longest shelf-life.

July

Annual Plants

- Start fall seedlings.
- Continue harvesting and weeding.
- Increase watering to 2 inches per week if there isn't much rain.
- Ensure soil is covered with straw or some other mulch.

Pollinator Garden

- Keep plants watered, and the area weeded and mulched.
- [Deadhead](#) flowering plants to encourage more blooms.

Herb Garden

- [Harvest basil](#) regularly to encourage leaf growth.

Compost

- Continue to add to active pile until it reaches 4 by 3 by 3 feet.
- Maintain moisture by watering and/or covering with cloth.
- Continue turning piles on a weekly basis.

Fruit trees

- [Keep trees watered](#), and prune any dead, diseased, or broken limbs.

General

- Make sure you have a plan for keeping fall seedlings alive in the heat. Keep them in the shade or indoors most of the day, but allow them to get some sun and exposure to wind.

August

Annual Plants

- Keep up the weeding, watering, and harvesting.
- Harvest summer crops regularly to keep them producing healthily.
- Plant fall crops, both seedlings and seeds, and make sure they get water.

Pollinator Garden

- Deadhead flowering plants.

Herb Garden

- Plant cilantro for fall harvesting
- Cut back flowers on lemon balm, sorrel, stevia, and basil.

Compost

- Continue to add to active pile until it reaches 4 by 3 by 3 feet.
- Maintain moisture by watering and/or covering with cloth.
- Continue turning piles on a weekly basis.

Fruit trees

- [Keep trees watered and mulched](#), and prune any dead, diseased, or broken limbs.

General

- You might have to water twice as much this month. Keep everything mulched and water early in the day to allow water to soak in before it evaporates.

September

Annual Plants

- Weed, water, harvest!
- Continue planting fall crops. Carrot germination will be more successful this month, so consider a succession in early September.
- Plant carrots and hardy greens late this month for winter greens and early spring harvests.

- [Plant cool season cover crop](#) in areas without summer or fall crops.

Pollinator Garden

- Keep weeding and deadheading annual flowers.

Herb Garden

- Plant cilantro.
- Cut back flowers on herbs, except where you plan on saving seeds.

Compost

- Continue to add to active pile until it reaches 4 by 3 by 3 feet.
- Maintain moisture by watering and/or covering with cloth.
- Continue turning piles on a weekly basis.

Fruit trees

- Stop pruning, fertilizing, and watering around the end of month to discourage any new growth that will be damaged during the fall frosts.

General

- Do your best to remove fall weeds before they go to seed!

October

Annual Plants

- Plant garlic in the second half of the month and mulch heavily.
- Continue planting cover crop as you remove summer and fall vegetables.
- Harvest final frost-sensitive crops before the first expected frost.

Pollinator Garden

- Keep weeding and deadheading annual flowers. Avoid deadheading perennials so you don't encourage new growth going into the frost, which could injure plants.

Herb Garden

- Collect seeds for saving (chives, basil, spilanthes, cilantro).
- Plant new perennial herbs early in the month (sage, rosemary, thyme, lavender).
- Dig up any frost-sensitive herbs you plan on [saving indoors](#) (stevia, spilanthes, lemongrass).

Compost

- Figure out where you will store fallen leaves, which are a great source of brown material to mix with pumpkins from Halloween and fall festivals!

Fruit trees

- Mulch around trunks of trees to protect young roots from cold weather.

General

- You may get a frost this month! Row cover can help protect sensitive plants, but harvest to make sure you don't lose crops.

November

Annual Plants

- Plant final cover crops (just grasses like rye at this point) and make sure young cover crops are getting enough water.
- Before nighttime temperatures are consistently below freezing, do your final harvest of fall crops.
- Make sure any overwintering crops are well-mulched and covered with row cover.

Pollinator Garden

- Final weeding and mulching.
- Prune some dead annual growth, but leave stems for winter insect habitat.

Herb Garden

- Harvest final herbs of the season. Think about drying some for seasoning, teas.

Compost

- Cut up larger stems that came out of garden into (about) 2-inch pieces.
- Make sure your brown materials consist of a combination of different sized components to increase aeration and vary rates at which materials will break down.

Fruit trees

- Make sure young tree trunks are covered by a trunk guard to protect from [sun scald](#) and grazing rodents.
- Stop watering to avoid encouraging new growth at the end of the season.
- Plant new fruit trees by mid-November.

General

- Clean out shed.

December

Annual Plants

- Inspect row cover.

Pollinator Garden

- No action needed.

Herb Garden

- No action needed.

Compost

- Add your final ingredients, turn, and water. Don't add more compost to your cooking pile if you want to use it in the spring.

Fruit trees

- No action needed.

General

- Make sure grounds are clean and tidy.
- Sharpen and clean tools and materials.