

# 25 tips to Get Your Garden Ready for Spring

<http://thegardeningcook.com/25-tips-to-get-your-garden-ready-for-spring/>

Even though most areas of the country are slowly warming, it's also true that most plants are still dormant. (I am delighted to see my early bulbs peeking through though. It won't be long before my daffodils, hyacinths and tulips will be blooming.)

Even though most plants are still dormant, there are a lot of ways that you can plan ahead and prepare your garden for spring. I have included a list of my top 25 things that you can do to ensure that your garden will be ready when the plants start to grow.

**1. Take Stock.** This is probably the most important step and you should not skip it. Most of us are eager to get out and actually do something in the garden after a long winter, but taking stock of what had happened over the winter is so important.

- ∞ Fences and trellises. Have they started to break or splinter from the moisture? Now is the time to mend them.
- ∞ Raised Beds. If you use raised beds, it is important to check the sides. Are they bowing? Are the joints coming apart? If so, fix them now. There is no point in planting in something that will start coming apart midseason.
- ∞ Winter weeds. No matter how well you weeded before the winter set in, there will still be weeds out there. Take stock. Will you need a tiller to get them up, or will a hoe do? For me this year, some beds can do with just a light till and for others like this one, I will need to borrow my neighbor's rototiller.
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- ∞ Garden Furniture. Now is the time to inspect your outdoor furniture too. Will anything need replacing? If you notice it now, you can be on the lookout for upcoming sales, rather than waiting till midseason when prices are the highest.

**2. Start Saving Containers for Seed Planting.** Don't wait until it is time to plant seeds before you think about containers. If you don't have a supply of pots for them, start saving household items to use for [planting seeds indoors](#) to give them a head start. Some good containers are egg cartons, yogurt containers, margarine tubs and the like. If you have pots on hand, be sure to disinfect them so that they will be ready when it is time for you to plant the seeds.

**3. Inspect your soil.** One of the biggest mistakes that inexperienced gardeners make is to start planting and working the soil too early. Months of snow and rain make for a very wet and compacted soil. If you work it now, it can get more compacted from treading on it, and from heavy machinery.

Pick up a ball of soil. If it stays compacted in a ball, it is too early to work it. The soil should break apart easily, not stay in a firm ball.

**4. Start your Perennial clean up.** Once the soil is sufficiently dry, it's time to start the cleanup of your perennials. What you will do depends on the type of perennial in question.

- ∞ For most perennials, if you did not prune your perennials in the fall, do so now.
- ∞ Remove any dead plants and add them to the compost bin. If they really are dead, they won't grow back.
- ∞ Some perennials with woody stems actually prefer pruning in the spring. Examples are [buddleia](#), and lavender.
- ∞ Evergreen perennials don't really go dormant in some areas of the country. But they may still need trimming now. Examples are hellebore and [coral bells](#) and also some of my ferns. For me, these are green right through the winter but still look scraggly in the spring, so they need a touch up.
- ∞ Grasses often are left for winter interest. My [Japanese silver grass](#) has interest all winter long, but in early spring, I give it a good hair cut to encourage it to grow again and to tidy it up.
- ∞ Roses. Early spring is a good time for pruning roses. Do this before the leaf buds open. This will allow the plant to send its energy into the new growth.

**5. Set up a compost area.** If you do not compost, what are you waiting for? The rich earthy compost is black gold to experienced gardeners. Find a level area of your garden and start your compost pile there. You don't even need a fancy compost bin. If you have about 10 feet free, you can use a [rolling compost pile](#). I have had more success from this method than from any compost bin that I have used.

**6. Treat yourself to something new.** Each year, I treat myself to one new piece of garden equipment or a new tool. There is no way that I can buy everything I need all at once. I purchased the most necessary ones first, and then gradually, each year, I have added something new. Last year it was a nice, good quality, pitch fork for my compost bin. This year, I was lucky enough that one of my sponsors sent me a [150 foot expandable gorilla hose](#) with brass fittings to try out and review. (affiliate link) I have wanted one for years but just never managed to put the money aside for it. I hate the sight of hoses all over my yard, and having to move them each time my husband mows the lawn. With the new expandable hose, that will be a thing of the past.

The hose is a full 150 feet in length and expands in use and contracts when not. It has really well made brass fittings, as well as a shut off valve on one end. I am delighted to have this baby.

**7. Examine your Tools.** Did you [winterize your tools](#) last fall? If you did, then lucky you! All you need is to check them over and maybe do a light oiling and gather them so they are ready. If not, you have a few things to do to get them ready!

- ∞ Inspect the tools and clean the ones that need it.
- ∞ Sharpen the edges of tools. Not only will it make digging easier, you will also be less likely to transfer disease from damaged and diseased plants than if your tool edges are dull.
- ∞ Clean and inspect your power tools to make sure they are in working order
- ∞ Refill the gas cans of your power tools to make sure they will run in tip top shape.

**8. Order your seeds now.** One of every gardener's favorite things to do each year is to look through the gardening magazines that are starting to arrive. Place your order now so that you will have the seeds when it is time to actually plant them.

**9. Look over your potting area.** Do you have a potting table? If not, drag out a sturdy table from the attic and put it to use. Check over your pots. Sterilize those that need it. [Clean your clay pots](#) if you did not do it in the fall. Get potting soil, fertilizers (if you use them) and other soil additives now so that they will be on hand when you need them.

**10. Edging.** Now is a good time to get the [edges of your garden beds](#) ready. It will make sure that the weeds won't start growing into the beds once the lawn starts growing and will save you one job later in the spring, when all you will really want to do is to get into the bed and dig. I spent many nice days during the winter and very early spring getting one large bed edged. It's almost done – just a few more feet to go, and knowing that I won't have to do that later is a great feeling.

**11. Mulching.** Once the winter weeds are gone and the perennials are tidied up, lay down some mulch. There are so many reasons to mulch:

- ∞ It cools the roots of the plants, meaning that they will need less water once the growing season starts.
- ∞ It helps to smother weeds and prevent them from growing. You have spent all that time getting rid of the winter weeds. Make it easy to keep it that way with mulch!
- ∞ Mulching feeds the soil as it breaks down.
- ∞ And it looks great when things start growing!

**12. Stake plants.** Figure out which perennials will need staking and get them inserted. It is so much easier to put a stake in before you need it, than to have to deal with all the massive growth, when staking is overdue. Sure, it'll look a bit like big toothpicks for a while, but you will be glad you did it.

**13. Supports for Vegetables.** The same goes for supports that you use for vegetables such as climbing beans and peas. Get them in early and when you plant the seeds, you will know that the supports will be there for them when they start growing. This handy teepee supported my climbing beans last year. I left it in place and just need to move it when I rotate my crops this year. [See how to make this bean teepee here.](#)

**14. Test your soil.** It is a good idea to take a PH test of your soil each year, so you will know if you need to add anything to it. If you do, get those supplies ready. For already healthy soil, just adding compost may be all that you will need.

**15. The Compost Pile.** Inspect not just your garden beds, but your compost pile too. Turn it. Check for things that are diseased and remove those and also any seed heads that you may find. You won't want to be adding compost with weed seeds in it to freshly weeded soil!

**16. Divide and Conquer!** Check to see if perennials have outgrown their spots. Early spring is the time to divide over grown perennials. Give some to your gardening friends or plant the divisions in other areas of your garden. Transplant plants that are just too big for the garden bed they are in now. Last year, I had to transplant almost everything in one garden bed because I miscalculated how closely to put the plants when I first planted the bed. Crowded perennials just don't grow well and really benefit from division. If you divide and transplant early in the spring, they won't be set back as much as if you do it later in the summer.

**17. Think ahead about some new flowers.** I try to add several new plants each year. Last year, it was a Hellebore. I was determined to have something that would flower in the winter time and I am so glad I planned ahead for it. We had snow during the last few weeks and this beauty was still blooming. What a delight! What will you add to your garden this year?

**18. Fertilize.** Once you have tested your soil to know what condition it is, get out the fertilizer or compost. Most plants like to be fertilized early in the spring when they are having their initial growth spurt. I use a handful of compost in every hole that I dig for a new plant. It's a great habit to get into.

**19. Use that garden Planner.** Do you intend to make changes to your garden this year? Did some things work well where they are and some languish? Get out that garden planner and sketch your garden the way you would like it to be. Check the times that your plants took to flower last year. See when your last frost will be so that you know when you can start. A garden planner is invaluable. I planned my [combination perennial/vegetable garden bed](#) last year before I ever dug one hole and I am so glad I did. I had a concrete idea of how it would turn out before I ever started digging.

**20. Don't forget the planters.** Not all gardening is done in the ground. Take stock of your patio planters. Dig out the weeds, inspect them for cracks, and refresh the soil for new plantings.

**21. Check over your feeders.** Give your bird bath [a good cleaning](#). Clean out bird houses and put in fresh feed and bedding for your feathered friends. Give your hummingbird feeder a good cleaning. Make a stock of [hummingbird nectar](#) to use when the weather warms up and the hummers arrive.

**22. Add a new garden bed.** If you have the room, and the ambition, dig up a new garden bed, or make a lasagne bed for planting later in the year.

**23. Think Native.** Spend some time learning about the plants that are native to your area and consider planting these. Your water bill will thank you and you will be planting things that will have a good likelihood of success.

**24. Rake your lawns.** Raking your lawns will get rid of winter debris. It will also help to aerate the soil to insure that air gets to the root zone and will get your lawn off to a good start. Inspect the lawn while you are doing this to see if you need to reseed some areas, or aerate more fully.

**25. Prune trees and shrubs.** Look over your small trees and shrubs to see what needs early pruning. Doing so will help to maintain good form for them, and will result in vigorous growth when the growing season really gets going.