

# Yard & Garden 2011

## County Extension Services Offers Some Friendly Advice For Your Yard, Garden

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Spring has finally arrived and it's the perfect time to get out in your garden or work on transforming your yard into the perfect outdoor retreat. Cynthia Bergman from the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service offers these tips to help you reach your lawn and garden goals.

### When To Plant Your Garden

This spring season has not been the most ideal for planting gardens. So the all-important question is when can you plant your garden?

It really depends on what you are planting and how much of a betting person you are, says Bergman.

What makes answering this question difficult is the fact that South Dakota has more than one zone for hardiness. Bergman says in Yankton, gardeners shouldn't have anything like tomatoes planted before May 11 this year because of the possibility of frost.

Plants like radishes, lettuce, onions and peas could be planted prior to May 11 because they are a cold weather plant. If it was to freeze, these plants would be safe because they are underground, says Bergman. Other plants that fall under this category are spinach, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and beets.

These plants can be planted earlier because they grow better in the cooler weather.

"If a light frost hits them they will tend to freeze just to the ground. Then you can just cut the dead brown parts off with scissors and the active growing part is still underground."

Now potatoes, she said, are a warm season grower. But because the active growing point is underground, you could plant these earlier and just cut off any light frost damage.

Other warm season plants include sweet corn, lima beans, tomatoes, peppers, melons, cucumbers and pumpkins.

### Pruning

Many people take time in the spring to start pruning, but is that always the right time.

Some of the trees, shrubs and vines that can be trimmed early include clematis and hydrangeas. But there are also several that shouldn't be trimmed until after they are done flowering this spring. Ever-popular lilacs and forsythia are in this category. Others that can wait to be pruned are azaleas, flowering dogwoods, honeysuckle, some varieties of spirea and crabapples.

"Lilacs can get too big, and then all of a sudden they are in your picture window. Wait until they are done flowering and then



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

you can prune. As soon as those flowers fade and start to drop off, that's when you should do it — about June 1."

As mentioned above, honeysuckle should not be pruned until it's done flowering. But this shrub can also be cut back to the ground, and it will return to usefulness quite rapidly, says the extension office.

It is also good to remember that some trees — like maple, birch, dogwood, elm and walnut — are known as bleeding trees. If they are pruned too early they can bleed and while it doesn't cause any harmful effects to the trees it can be prevented by waiting until they are well leaved before pruning.

Here are prime reasons for pruning:

- To maintain or reduce the size of a tree or shrub
- To remove dead, diseased or broken branches. This can be done any time you see unhealthy branches.
- To rejuvenate and restore old shrubs.
- To prevent damage to life or property.
- To stimulate future flowering or fruit development.

### Insects, Dandelions and Your Flowering Shrubs, Trees

According to the extension office, poor or low fruit yields on trees can be attributed to poor pollination and frost.

There are many reasons for poor pollination — the biggest one being the lack of suitable cross-pollination. This can be due to cooler temperatures and the use of insecticides. Bees travel shorter distances when the temps are below 50 degrees, or if it is rainy or windy.

Spraying your yard right now for dandelion control will kill

your native bees, says Bergman.

"For yard care you want the weed & feed now. But if you have fruit production, mow the dandelions do not spray them. Once the flower petals on fruiting plants start falling off, then you can start using insecticides again. It's really critical when they are in bloom."

### Your Yard

Alright, we have just mentioned that you shouldn't use insecticides on your yard if you have fruiting trees or shrubs.

Now is also not the time to use pesticides to get rid of grubs, says Bergman.

People are making the mistake of applying pesticides now, when it is least effective. She said one reason for the low effectiveness is because the majority of soils in this area have a pH level greater than 7.8. The other reason, she adds, is because some of these pesticides are highly toxic and can kill the friendlies.

The best time to treat your lawn for grubs is in mid-July. There are a few products out there that are less toxic.

If you have any further questions about your garden, Bergman encourages you to contact your local extension services office, or any lawn care professional.





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