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Checklist as the weather warms up

Your yard is just about to wake up from winter—here's what you need to do to ready it for a colorful, fragrant season.



By [Lauren Wellbank](#) | March 15, 2022



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You do quite a bit of work at the end of a year's growing season, in fall, when garden beds need to be cleared, mulched, and readied for a long season of cold weather. While this preparation will certainly get you closer to an even better floral and vegetable show when the weather warms, there are still a few tasks to handle on the other side of winter. That's why we, along with two experts, created this spring gardening checklist, which breaks out which chores are essential as the dawn of the growing period approaches.

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Your garden tools have likely been packed away all winter, which is why Bree Iman Clarke, the founder of and creative grower behind The Plant Project, suggests putting a tool check at the top of your list—yes, even if there is still snow on the ground. "Prepping and sharpening these tools in the winter is always a good idea," she says. "If you miss that winter window, make sure it is done before the pruning season starts." This is the time, she says, to sharpen the blades of hand pruners and mowers, and to inspect items like shovels and spades.

Hook up your hose.

If you live in a region that experiences deep freezes, wait until closer to your last frost date before reattaching and testing your hose. Iman Clarke notes that you should always check your old hose for leaks and replace it if it didn't make it through the winter unscathed.

Clean out your flower beds.

Even if you did a thorough clean-out at the end of the previous growing season, your flowers beds likely saw a lot of action over the cold-weather period, says DeQuilla Henderson, the owner of Flowered. "Remove dead leaves and any other debris from storms that happened during winter," she says, adding that you'll want to start by cutting back any dried foliage (hedge trimmers work wonders for this, she notes). "Then, remove old mulch from around perennials and ornamental grasses."

Add fresh mulch.

If you want a polished, manicured look, Henderson says spring is the perfect time to add a fresh layer of mulch to your garden beds. "The soil will also thank you," she explains, noting that a robust mulch application goes far beyond aesthetics. "This fresh layer will help the soil retain moisture and fight weed growth."

Prune trees and shrubs.

Make sure you get to this step in early spring, says Henderson. "Prune trees and shrubs before they have new growth or when buds begin to break for blooming," she says, adding that if you wait too long, you could prevent your fruit trees, in particular, from producing.

Start your summer bulbs and cool-season annuals.

According to Iman Clarke, early spring is also the time get those summer bulbs in the ground. However, the real work begins earlier: "It's recommended that you chill bulbs for 10 to 14 weeks," she explains.

"Chilling flower bulbs breaks a cycle that allows the plant to begin growth." It's also the right time to plant items that appreciate a good spring chill, like pansies and snapdragons in your flower beds or potatoes, artichokes, and some lettuces in your vegetable section. "Freshly planted perennials need a little time to get settled and grow new roots before the hot summer hits," Iman Clarke notes.

Clean up your garden furniture and fixtures.

The nights may still be chilly (and some of those days, too!), but spring is the best time to make sure your garden furniture is clean, set up correctly, and ready to use—and don't forget to top off those bird feeders that bring your feathered friends to your yard. "Fill birdbaths once temperatures are reliably above freezing," Iman Clarke says. "If chances of freezing temps still threaten, slip a basic heater into water to keep it thawed and available for birds."

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