News Release

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Gardeners Get Busy With April To-Do List

It’s here. It’s here. It’s finally here. Spring, glorious spring, has arrived and it’s time to wake up our gardens.

Start with some spring cleaning. Tidy up your flower gardens by removing stalks not cut back in the fall. Rake off clumps of leaves. And feed the soil in all of your beds with an inch or so of compost.

This is a perfect time to plant trees, shrubs and perennials. Cooler spring weather gives them a chance to grow good roots before the heat hits. How deep should your planting hole be? As deep as the pot and twice as wide.

Dig, divide and replant perennials now. Most perennials need to be separated every 3 years to stay vigorous. Slice a dug clump in sections – each with healthy leaves and roots – and replant, giving each a deep drink to get started.

How often should you water newly planted plants? Perennials I water once a week for a few weeks. New trees and shrubs get a deep soak weekly until Thanksgiving. Yes, that’s a lot. But healthy roots make for healthy plants. Newly planted trees fail most often for lack of water.

Should you stake trees? The debate continues, but I stake trees for the first year for stability, especially on windy sites. Cushion support wires with a bit of old garden hose so they don’t damage the bark.
Now is a good time to put up a birdhouse or two. Birdsong is my favorite soundtrack while gardening. Who doesn’t smile when they hear a Carolina wren practicing its triplets of teakettle-teakettle-tea?

Sunshine yellow tete-a-tete daffodils are trumpeting spring and heralding a season of tulips and hyacinth and a dozen other bulbs. I know it’s hard, but let those dying leaves turn yellow, then brown before cutting them back. They’re feeding the bulb for next year’s bloom.

Get your veggie bed ready by turning in your organic winter mulch (like chopped leaves) or cover crop. You can till, but hand-turning is better. Tilling can damage soil structure, harm beneficial soil organisms and make it harder for plants to take up water and nutrients.

Need plants? Circle April 27 in red on your calendar. That’s the day of the Master Gardener plant sale. From 8:00 a.m. to noon, we will have hundreds of Master Gardener-grown plants for sale.

The sale is inside this year, but still at the Washington County Agriculture Education Center on the Sharpsburg Pike. Look for great prices on perennials, vegetables, herbs, native plants and more.

What’s new? We will have children’s activities, a silent auction, and learning stations for adults. The garden market is back, brimming with bargains on new and used garden tools, books, art, gifts and supplies.

It’s spring. Get busy!

Annette Ipsan is the Extension educator for horticulture and the Master Gardener program in Washington County for the University of Maryland in Washington County. She can be reached at 301-791-1604 or aipsan@umd.edu.