Have you seen this?

Four-season lettuce

Lettuce is a perfect crop for spring or fall: quick-growing, tolerant of cool weather, useful. But it often flags, turns bitter and bolts in hot weather and heavy frosts will kill it.

The solutions to this are:

- Grow in an area that gets more sun in the spring than in the summer - in the shade of a tree is great, or use shade cloth to alter the environment.
- Choose varieties that suit the season.
- Keep well-watered in hot weather.
- Grow under a cold frame or plastic-covered tunnel in the winter.

You can grow just about any lettuce for spring and fall. Some are particularly cold-tolerant and good for holding over winter. Here's the list of varieties we're trying for summer, all of which are supposed to be heat-tolerant and bolt-resistant.

- Buttercrunch
- Cherokee
- Concept
- Green Star
- Muir
- New Red Fire
- Seafresh
- Summer Bibb
- Toretto

--- Read more from Erica Smith about growing lettuce on the GIEI Blog
--- Lettuce profile on the GIEI Website
This is a good time to have your soil tested if you have not had your lawn or garden soil tested for the past 3-4 years. Why do you need to test your soil? The primary season for fertilizing Maryland lawns is the fall. Apply fertilizer in the spring only if your turf is weak and thin or if you skipped fall fertilization. Most spring bulbs have fully emerged and are flowering at this time. Remove the spent flowers but leave bulb foliage alone until it dies back naturally. Now is an ideal time to plant new or transplant existing trees and shrubs.

What's hot

Trending Topics

What is the date of the last frost in my area? - A popular question to ask this time of year!
Planting Trees and Shrubs - Now is the perfect time for planting.
Wild garlic and star of Bethlehem - Moist soil allows for easier removal of these early season weeds.

Featured Video

How to Prune Your Boxwoods

Luke Gustafson, Agent Associate for UME Charles County shows how and why you should prune your boxwoods to keep them healthy and disease-free.

Featured Video

How to Build a Raised Bed
It's a great time for an outdoor project! Learn how to build a simple, wood-frame raised bed for your garden. University of Maryland Extension's Jon Traunfeld takes you step-by-step through the process and gives you tips on how to get started growing. Raised beds are an easy way to begin cultivating your own vegetables. 

Read about planning your garden
View on YouTube

Q&A

When is it safe to remove mulch piled on my roses and new perennials that I planted last year?

Mulch is applied in the fall to tender plants to protect them and their roots from cold injury and heaving during the winter. When the soil warms up and new growth starts in spring, mulch must be pulled back. Otherwise, the new growth under the mulch can stay too wet and rot. Also, it is not recommended to have mulch piled up around the plants. Mulch should not be touching stems or leaves. There is no magic date for removal; go by the weather and the forecast. If after removal, a severe late frost is predicted, cover tender plants. But, most roses and hardy perennials can take a light frost even on new growth.

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension's experts have answers! Send in your questions and photos to Ask an Expert.

Have a suggestion for a topic to cover in the HGIC newsletter? Send in your suggestions.

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