

# Spring Garden Checklist



## Preparing New Inground Beds

- Remove existing vegetation:** smother with cardboard, a tarp, or landscape fabric; till; or cover with woodchips or mulch
- Design the bed:** Assess your site conditions and know the plant characteristics of the desired plants.
- Soil test:** get a baseline and test for nutrients and heavy metals. This might not be necessary for native plants.
- Build the bed:** Consider cost, time, money, and carpentry skills when determining materials.



## Seeds



If you are starting seeds, it's important to know what you plan on planting. **Know what your seed needs to germinate.** Some seeds require cold stratification or physically roughing the seed coat (scarification) in order to germinate.

## Seed Starting

- Pick the date you plan to plant outdoors and work backwards using the information on the packet.



Management for success:

- Seeds should be kept evenly moist
- Keep seeds generally warm
- Fertilize after first set of true leaves emerge or pot into potting mix with nutrients
- Have good air circulation to minimize chances of fungal diseases
- Bring seedlings outside to acclimate them to outside conditions (hardening)



## Pruning Trees and Shrubs

- Prune early blooming trees and shrubs after they bloom (forsythia, lilac, weigela, flowering almond)
- Prune deciduous trees in late winter/EARLY spring (when they are dormant)- Before March 15
- Always prune the **3-D's- Dead, Diseased, Damaged**
- Sterilize equipment:** Use 10% bleach solution or 70% undiluted isopropyl alcohol to prevent diseases.

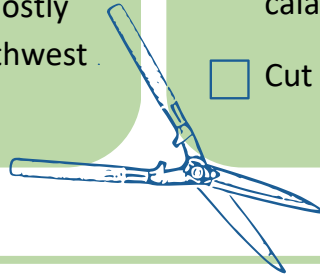
## Perennials



Plant perennials according to their hardiness zone

- **Hardiness Zone:** Standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which perennial plants are most likely to thrive at a location. Cook County is mostly zone 6A with the very northwest being zone 5b.

- Water well all season.
- Divide most perennials (Clump forming plants such as hostas, daylilies, coneflowers)
- Weed
- Plant summer bulbs (dahlias, canna, gladiolus, caladium, etc.) after the ground thaws.
- Cut back perennial plant material if needed



## About Cutting Back



Your garden provides habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators. Limit cutting back your garden and consider leaving the stems. If you do cut back:

- **Chop & Drop:** chop the plant material and drop it where the plant used to stand.
- **Bundle stems:** If you can't leave stems where they lie, consider bundling and moving to an undisturbed area to still allow for habitat.



## Lawns

- Fill in bare spots
- Mow as needed
- Sharpen mower blade
- Leave grass clippings as you mow

## Manage for Pests

- Monitor your lawn and landscape for pests/weeds
- Get to know your weeds using trusted resources
- Manage according to the IPM pyramid



## Other Considerations

- Maintain your tools (sanitize/disinfect, sharpen blades, oil hinges)
- Clean wildlife houses, baths, and feeders
- Collect brown for compost

## Contact Information

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