

101 Tips to Have a Fabulous Lawn and Garden

Legal Disclaimer

While every attempt has been made to ensure that the information presented here is correct, the contents herein are a reflection of the views of the author and are meant for educational and informational purposes only. All links are for information purposes only and are not warranted for content, accuracy or any other implied or explicit purpose.

The author shall in no event be held liable for any loss or other damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential or other damages.

Lawn and Garden Care Tips

1. **Remove the debris** – One of the best things that you can do to get your lawn in shape for the coming season is the remove any debris; such as branches and rocks that may have accumulated over the winter. Not only will this help give your grass room to grow, but it will also prevent safety hazards once mowing season begins.
2. **Do not over fertilize with nitrogen** – Traditionally, many people would prepare their lawn with high amounts of nitrogen-based fertilizer in the spring. Unfortunately, this often leads to a significant amount of damage to the grass. If you are going to use nitrogen, be sure to wait until you have mowed at least a few times before you fertilize with nitrogen and wait until there will no longer be frost on the ground.
3. **Use controlled-release fertilizers** – If you are going to use a fertilizer in the spring, then you are best to look for one that contains nutrients that are released slowly over time, rather than all at once. You should also consider fertilizing over time, so that you help your grass to grow slowly rather than all at once.
4. **May 1st is a good date to start weeding out crabgrass** – In most areas of the country, crabgrass does not start to root until around the middle of May. Therefore, if you are going to apply an anti-crabgrass formula to your lawn it is a good idea to begin doing so around May 1st. Of course, this is not set in stone and if your climate is unusually warm or you notice crabgrass developing earlier, you can feel free to apply the formula earlier in the year.
5. **Seed your lawn in the fall, not in the spring** – Although many people do prefer to seed their lawn in the spring, it is not as optimal as seeding in the fall. Although it may seem that new grass would have a hard time surviving the winter, it is actually more at risk of damage from the high heat and sunlight of summer. Therefore, consider seeding your lawn before winter this year!
6. **For best results, use a blended fertilizer** – A high-quality fertilizer should contain a small amount of nitrogen that is non-water soluble, potash and phosphate. The key to a balanced formula is knowing how much of each of the ingredients your lawn really needs. There are also other minerals that are frequently added to fertilizers - some lawns require these and some do not. Depending on your soil type, geographic location and climate, the fertilizer that you choose needs to contain the right amount of each nutrient. Check with your local gardening center to learn more.
7. **The darker your lawn color, the better** – Do you realize that your goal should be to get your lawn to the darkest possible color? With this goal in mind, you will have a way to determine how well your lawn and garden preparations are working. Of course, it may take you several seasons to determine the correct approach, but in the end your efforts will be rewarded.

8. **Consider a mechanical seeder for best results** – If you find yourself needing to seed or re-seed your lawn, it may be more work than you are anticipating. Therefore, a mechanical seed spreader may be an investment worth making. Or, consider renting one from a local lawn care center. There are also seed sprayers, however they are not recommended for inexperienced landscapers because of the precision that must be applied to achieve proper coverage.
9. **If you want fast results on your lawn this season, consider sodding** – If you don't know what sod is, you probably have seen it and don't realize it! Sod is simply instant grass. You can purchase sod in squares or rolls, or you can hire a professional to create your lawn. Sodding is best done in the late spring.
10. **Find out how short you should be cutting your grass** – Before the mowing season begins, you should take care to find out what the best height is for your lawn. Most people who experience problems with their lawn burning are cutting it too short. And, those whose lawns get out of control between mowing may not be going low enough. A good rule to keep in mind is that you should never mow more than 1/3 of the visible grass when you are mowing in order to avoid damaging the blades.
11. **Prepare a watering schedule** – Do you realize that when you water your lawn several times a day in short intervals, you may not be helping your grass to grow? Studies have shown that the best watering technique is to water for an extended period of time at infrequent intervals. Much like nature waters your lawn with rainfall. For example, if you live in an area with clay soil you really need to water for about 5 hours at a time a few days a week. Most people do not water this way, but for the best results this is what you should do.
12. **Don't skip spring lawn and garden preparation** – If for some reason you opt not to do preventative spring maintenance on your lawn and gardens, you will undoubtedly pay for it for the rest of the year! While you may be able to take some shortcuts, be sure not to completely skip this important step.
13. **Never skip raking** – It is just as important to rake your lawn in the spring as it is in the fall. Thatch is what accumulates on your lawn during the winter to protect the roots from snow and freezing temperatures. This thatch must be removed in order to keep your lawn healthy. Pros will tell you that even a half of an inch of thatch accumulating can cause serious problems with your lawn. So, don't skip this important lawn care step!
14. **Raking can show signs of more serious problems** – You should rake your lawn deeply every spring, because when you do you are not only removing dangerous build-up, but you are also freeing any tangled grass blades. Additionally, if your lawn has been affected by snow mold or other problems over the winter, raking may eliminate the eventuality of bare patches.

15. **Aeration is important when traffic is high** – If you have a high traffic lawn - or even just some spots that get a lot of foot traffic - you should aerate every spring to avoid a condition known as compaction. If you see a significant amount of moss build up in your lawn, then this is a sign that your lawn could be in need of aeration. You can get an aeration tool that is inexpensive at your local lawn and garden store.
16. **Keep an eye out for moss** – If you see a significant build up of moss in and around your lawn and garden, this could indicate significant problems including a need for aeration or a need to combat high acid levels in the soil. Both are simple procedures, which will not require a significant investment of time. However, it is important to address the problems as soon as possible to get your lawn healthy for the coming season.
17. **Watch for bare spots** – If you see bare spots developing throughout your lawn as a result of your pets, or high traffic, you can do what is called overseeding. Basically, you will be placing seed in the bare spots to sprout new growth. The best time to do this is late in the fall, when temperatures are mild and the sun is not as hot as in the spring and summer.
18. **Use preemergent herbicides** – The difference between conventional herbicides and preemergent herbicides is that while conventional herbicides kill weeds as they are located, preemergent herbicides treat your lawn to prevent the growth of weeds, crabgrass and other irritants from the time of their application. There is a specific window of time in which the herbicides are effective when applied, check with your local lawn care center to determine the best time for your specific region.
19. **Aerate first and then apply chemicals** – If you intend to aerate your lawn or garden, do so prior to applying any chemicals, herbicides or fertilizers. Otherwise, you will be wasting the chemicals. Also, herbicides form a blanketing shield over the soil. Aeration will puncture this blanket, which may lead to problems.
20. **Be on the lookout for dandelions** – Dandelions are probably the largest lawn pest known to man. If you want to keep them from spreading once they begin to appear, snap off the head of the flower before it turns to seed. Otherwise, you can expect to have a sea of yellow blanketing your lawn all summer long. You can treat dandelions upon emergence with a spot killer. Preemergent herbicides are generally ineffective against dandelions.
21. **Check out your mower** – Spring is a good time to perform preventative maintenance on your mower, and to make sure that it is working in optimal condition. At the same time, you can take a few minutes to check your other landscaping tools to ensure that they are in good repair for the coming season.
22. **Develop a garden plan** – One of the largest mistakes that you can make when it comes to landscaping the gardens around your home is not to plan in advance. If you don't plan properly, you could end up with overgrown plants that are too close

together or underperforming plants that have been planted in the wrong area. Take time in the early spring to plan and review what you will plant during the coming season.

23. **Take a look at garden irrigation** – Insufficient irrigation can be a major problem for your garden. If you are planting flowers that require a significant amount of water, you might want to opt for an in-ground irrigation system which is best installed before the planting season. An added bonus is that this allows you to stop worrying about who will water your gardens when you are away!
24. **Keep an eye out for erosion** – If you are starting to see obvious signs of erosion at any spot in your lawn or garden, one way that you can combat this is to plant ground covering plants, which will help to keep the soil in place and prevent further deterioration.
25. **Work with what you already have instead of making huge changes in your landscape** – One of the mistakes that many people make when it comes to preparing their lawn and garden in the spring is that they try to force the soil and ground to behave differently than nature intended. Find out what you can do to work with the consistency of your soil, the lay of your specific land and the amount of natural drainage that your lawn and gardens offer. You will find landscaping a much less stressful under-taking when you work with what you have.
26. **Keep an eye on those predators** – In case you haven't already noticed, squirrels and other wild animals delight in the idea of eating your tulips and other plants. Luckily, there is an easy way to deter these predators. Plant things that they don't like around the perimeter of your lawn and garden. One particular flower that squirrels hate to eat is daffodils. If you have a problem with deer, plant ground covering ferns and ornamental grasses.
27. **Try mushroom manure** – A mixture of sand and mushroom manure mixed into your garden soil will help to prepare your flowerbeds for planting. Be sure to mix in some fresh topsoil as well, because new topsoil will help to cut down on the amount of salt in the ground.
28. **Turn over your ground as soon as possible** – It's important to prepare for your garden for planting as early as possible in the spring. Keep in mind though that your soil should be mostly dry when you turn it over. Otherwise, if the ground is wet you may not be able to turn over a full 12 inches of dirt. Twelve inches is optimal whether you are using a spade or a garden hoe.
29. **Plan your vegetable garden in the early spring** – If you are an avid vegetable gardener, then you already realize that you need to rotate where you plant crops each year in order to maximize growth. Keeping a gardening journal is a good way to remember where you planted each item in previous years. Be sure to consult it when you are planning for this year and future years.

30. **Cover your garden with a tarp to kill early spring weeds** – Covering your flowerbeds with heavy plastic or a tarp during early spring will help to kill off any weeds that are just beginning to grow and prevent future weed growth. When you uncover the flower beds you should wait approximately seven days before you turn over the ground. Eventually, when you see the weeds beginning to sprout again – you should turn the ground over one more time prior to planting.
31. **Mulch around seedlings as soon as possible** – When planting in the spring, watch for the first seedlings to appear and then mulch carefully around them to prevent the growth of weeds, which could cause damage to the new plants. If you are planting vegetables then you might want to cover your ground with black landscaping cloth and cut holes in it to plant the vegetables. This covering is a good idea for plants such as tomatoes, which like a lot of heat.
32. **Prepare your garden paths** – If you have garden or lawn paths, you will want to cover them with a significant amount of mulch in the early spring in order to prevent weed growth. You may need to re-mulch throughout the summer as well to keep them looking their best. A commonly used trick is to spread a thick layer of newspaper on the pathway, covering that layer with a heavy layer of mulch. The weeds will have a hard time penetrating the newspaper, keeping your pathway weed free!
33. **Consider avoiding chemical treatments for your lawn** – During the past few decades, the use of chemical herbicides and fertilizers has gained a tremendous amount of popularity. However, many lawn pros urge their customers to avoid using these chemicals because they can kill off earthworms and natural organisms that help to keep your lawn healthy. And, they can also cause the top of the grass blades to grow so fast that the root system cannot support the growth. Keep this in mind before you consider using chemicals on your lawn.
34. **Test the drainage of your lawn** – Dig a hole about six inches deep and fill it with water. The hole should be completely empty within eight hours. If in eight hours, there is still water in that hole you should have your soil tested because you most likely have a drainage problem. If you want to find out if you have the opposite problem, water your lawn and then dig a six inch hole in the watered area after 48 hours. If the hole is entirely dry after just 48 hours, then your lawn is draining too quickly.
35. **Keep an eye on the color of your lawn and shrubs** – If you notice that your green grass is less green than it should be, the cause may be a lack of magnesium. Consider using a magnesium sulfate compound on your lawn to bring back the bright color of your grass. Talk to your local lawn and garden store to find out how much magnesium sulfate you should add per square foot of grass.

36. **If your drainage is not optimal, don't wait to fix the problem** – If you determine that your lawn and garden are not draining optimally you may be in for significant problems. Therefore, take the time to address the problem as soon as it is discovered. Otherwise, your soil may not contain the right amount of oxygen necessary for supporting your grass and plants.
37. **Check with the USDA** – There are specific maps (known as USDA maps) which show a breakdown of the U.S. into USDA zones. Each zone comes along with a recommended list of plants and grasses which will thrive in the particular climate and soil conditions of that geographic area. If you plant flowers or vegetables that are not native to your specific region, you may be inviting garden pests and other problems that will require chemical treatment later.
38. **Monitor the light in your garden** – In order to get optimal performance out of your gardens, it is important to make sure that you are planting in areas that have the right amount of light. To determine how much sunlight your plants will get, simply watch for a few days and see how much direct sunlight each particular area is getting at different points during the day. Make a note of this information and use it when selecting plants for your gardens.
39. **Become familiar with bloom times** – If you are not familiar with the term “bloom times”, you should be! In order to make sure that your garden stays beautiful throughout the year, choose plants with varying bloom times. This way, you will have flowers in your garden from early spring until late fall.
40. **Take care to deter birds in places where they could cause damage** – You don't want birds eating your corn or the fish in your ponds. Therefore, you should be sure to take action to deter birds from being in areas where they are not welcome. Consider using a device that emits a shrill sound at a regular interval, adding small spikes to the top of garden fences or using a bitter fruit based spray on your tree trunks. These simple techniques make it easy to keep birds from damaging your lawn and garden.
41. **Select your fertilizer carefully** – Fertilizers often contain metals and other chemicals that can be poisonous to humans. Therefore, you should avoid using fertilizers in your garden that might expose you to these harmful chemicals.
42. **Spring is a good time to trim** – Spring is a good time to start trimming your garden for summer. Keep in mind that some plants do go dormant over the winter, so just because a plant looks like its dead does not necessarily mean that it is. Be careful not to over trim or to remove plants that are actually still alive.
43. **Look for leftover weeds** – During your early spring walks around your lawn and garden, take some time to pull out any weeds still there from the fall. Remove them, roots and all, so that they do not begin to grow or to spread over the spring and summer seasons.

44. **Remove old mulch** – Mulch is only effective for one year, therefore spring is a good time to remove old mulch. Don't just cover it up or you will end up with too much. Too much mulch can lead to root decay and a host of other problems. Two to four inches is the right amount for most gardens.
45. **Pay attention to overnight temperatures** – Just because it's starting to be warm through the day, does not necessarily mean that overnight temperatures are high enough to support healthy plant growth. Therefore, hold off on your spring planting until overnight temperatures are consistently above freezing.
46. **Go through your lawn and garden chemicals** – Just as you wouldn't feed your pet expired food, you shouldn't use expired lawn and garden chemicals on your grass and plants! By doing so you are most likely doing more harm than good.
47. **Prepare cages and trellises ahead of planting season** – If you intend to plant tomatoes or anything else requiring an external support mechanism, spring is an excellent time to prepare the support structures. Therefore, they will be there when you need them.
48. **Sanitize seeding trays prior to planting** – If you intend to start your seedlings indoors during the early spring, you will most likely be recycling the same trays that you used last year. For optimal planting you should sanitize your trays. Soaking the trays in a solution of bleach and water for a few minutes and then allowing the trays to air dry is an excellent sanitizing technique.
49. **Prune deciduous trees prior to the appearance of buds** – If any of the deciduous trees and shrubs around your lawn and garden have broken or damaged limbs or need general pruning, you should prune prior to the appearance of buds on any of the branches to avoid damaging new growth. Be sure to trim broken limbs all the way down to the tree trunk.
50. **Prune hedges to a slight bevel** – When pruning your evergreen shrubs, be careful not to make them perfectly square. Instead, trim the top branches just a little shorter than the bottom. This way, you are ensuring that the bottom branches are getting as much sunlight as the top branches.
51. **Spray trees and shrubs with insecticides early in the spring** – Early spring pesticide applications are meant to halt the development of insect larva and eggs, in order to eliminate pest infestations later on in the year. A simple solution of olive oil and a teaspoon of dish soap can be effective against aphids and other small pests.
52. **Wrap seedlings in aluminum foil** – Wrap small vegetable seedlings in aluminum foil in order to protect the brittle stems from cutworms and other pests that tend to chew through the stems of young plants.

53. **Pay attention to the weather forecast** – If temperatures are predicted to drop below freezing, be certain to cover your newly planted shrubs and plants to protect them. You can use jars, newspaper hats or even a heavy blanket to protect them and keep the heat in. You can also add additional mulch around the base of young plants.
54. **Touch your plants** – Take some time to touch the individual leaves on your plants and shrubs in order to find weak ones. Remove those leaves when you find them so that they do not damage the other leaves on the plants and shrubs. Keep in mind that these leaves can also have a negative effect on adjacent plants and shrubs.
55. **When cultivating your gardens, stay away from your plants and shrubs** – When you are tilling your garden in the spring, be careful to avoid tilling near the base of plants and shrubs to keep from damaging them. When cultivating, add a slow release fertilizer designed to work well in your geographic region.
56. **Prune rose bushes once buds appear** – Unlike most other bushes in your gardens, you should wait to prune back your rose bushes until after buds have started to appear. The best place to prune rose bushes is above the outward facing buds. This will allow maximum air circulation around the new flowers.
57. **Plant shrubs in the early spring** – Planting shrubs in the early spring is optimal. Just be sure to add plenty of peat moss and compost to the soil surrounding the new addition to your garden. Adding these components to the soil will allow the ground to maintain a higher moisture level than just placing the shrubs into the ground.
58. **Plan a butterfly garden** – Whether you have children, or you just enjoy the beauty of butterflies, spring is a great time to plan a butterfly garden for summer. The most important thing to keep in mind is that a butterfly garden requires a tremendous amount of sunlight. Plant it in an area where there is full sun for between six and eight hours a day. Find some large rocks to give the butterflies a place to rest, since they need to be very warm in order to fly.
59. **Avoid mowing wet or damp grass** – Spring mowing can be a painstaking procedure due to overgrowth caused by spring rains. Remember that mowing your lawn when it is wet or damp can damage your mower as well as the new grass growth. Be sure to rake your lawn prior to the first mowing, so that you avoid hitting any rocks or twigs.
60. **Consider starting a compost pile with your spring clippings** – Do you realize that over a third of the landfill in the U.S. comes from lawn clippings and other organic materials that would make great compost for your lawn and garden? Composting is an excellent way to help the environment as well as a way to help your lawn and gardens look their best! Starting a compost pile can be as simple as placing clippings into a tightly closed trash bag with a little water. Turn the bag every few weeks and you will have wonderful compost for your garden in a few months.

61. **Attend a gardening class** – If you are living in a new climate region, or you are new to gardening, you might be wise to enroll in a gardening class that deals with how to prepare your lawn and garden and to plant the correct plants for your region. Often, free classes are available through your local library or lawn and garden centers.
62. **If you prefer to fertilize in the fall, don't use manure** – Many people prefer to apply manure in the fall. However, in general this is a waste of time and fertilizer. Once you till the soil in the spring, you will be eliminating any positive effects from the application and will need to re-apply the manure once the ground has been prepared.
63. **Clean your garden thoroughly in the fall** – Most people are less than careful about cleaning up their garden at the end of fall, although doing it then will save you a lot of problems in the following spring and summer. For one thing, the debris is easier to pick up before it has started to decay. For another, there is less risk of fungus, bacteria and pest larva if you have removed the debris before winter sets in. Keep this in mind this year - when the heat of summer is gone, give yourself a good start for next year.
64. **Determine ahead of time how much time you have to give** – Many people get over-zealous when it comes to spring planting. The end result is a garden that is not properly tended. Be sure to determine how much time you will have to devote to your gardens before planting. And, only plant what you can reasonably care for.
65. **Select the best plots** – Most likely, when you are selecting a new plot for a garden bed, you will be looking for one that gets the most sun and has the best drainage. Sometimes, there is no perfect spot. The best approach is to find the most favorable area in your lawn, and to treat the soil with whatever it needs to be as effective as possible.
66. **Get a soil test** – You should have a soil sample tested each and every year in order to determine the acidity and ph balance of your soil, as well as the salt level. Having a soil test each year is a good idea, because time will change the consistency of soil, as will the plants you have grown there in previous years. Fortunately, many universities offer this service to members of the public for a nominal fee.
67. **Debate the use of topsoil** – Most plants will grow perfectly fine in the soil you already have. Unless you are planning to raise a bed, or need to replenish soil as a result of erosion, there is generally no need to use topsoil in your gardens. Many people believe that topsoil is a better quality soil, and in general that is untrue. Any soil can be sold as topsoil, so if you are ordering some be sure to ask your supplier about the quality of the soil you are purchasing.
68. **Know the texture of your soil** – It is important to know the texture of your particular soil, so that you are prepared to make the best possible choices in terms of the plants you will include and the work you will do to prepare the soil for planting. One particular problem that can be identified by understanding your soil's texture is the

moisture level. Soil that is largely comprised of clay will hold more water, for a longer period of time. Sandy soil on the other hand will hold less moisture and require more frequent watering.

69. **Make sure your soil has enough organic material** – In order for your grass and plants to grow properly, they need to have adequate organic material around the roots. Around 5% of your soil should be composed of organic matter, because over the year this material will break down and allow for air circulation and water retention. Organic material can include straw, twigs, leaves and even sawdust.
70. **Choose the right type of mulch** – If you are adding mulch in an attempt to help feed your soil, then organic mulch is your best option. Over time, the organic materials in the mulch will break down and add nutrients to your soil. If you are using the mulch to deter weeds, then inorganic mulch is a better option because it does not add nutrients to the soil. Inorganic mulch can be made from plastic and other non-organic materials.
71. **If you are putting down landscaping plastic, use the correct technique** – In order to make your landscape plastic effective at keeping weeds down, you need to make sure that you dig a shallow trench around the border of the area to be covered. This will help to keep the plastic in place and on the ground. You can then cover the plastic with mulch and place rocks on the corners to prevent it from shifting throughout the year.
72. **Replace plastic annually** – Because it is inevitable that some weeds will poke through your landscaping plastic, it is important to replace the material every spring in order to keep weeds at bay. Often times, you may not need to continue to plastic off an area after a few years, but it's a good idea to repeat the plastic application for at least three years for the best results.
73. **Learn about shade** – It is important that you recognize the types of shade afforded by the trees and structures on your property when planning your gardens and maintaining your lawn. Keep a journal for a few days each season, in order to determine the amount of shade each area of your lawn gets throughout the daylight hours. There are three specific types of shade; dappled shade is the shade provided by trees, part shade is what happens as the sun moves during the day and is blocked by specific objects and deep shade occurs under evergreen trees that almost entirely block out the sunlight from reaching the ground.
74. **Check your soil's pH level** – Ideally, the pH of your soil should be between 5.8 and 6.5. You can add lime to raise the pH or aluminum sulfate to lower the pH. Having a pH that is either too high or too low can make it hard for your plants and grass to get the necessary nutrients. Therefore, it's worth the time to check the pH level and address any problems.

75. **Prune low branches** – Proper pruning is particularly important when you intend to plant flowers or bushes in the shade of, or underneath, an existing tree. Removing the lower branches of the tree will enable more sunlight to filter through to your plants and create a healthier environment for your grass. This can also help to eliminate the risk of developing moss or fungus infestations below thick trees.
76. **For a low maintenance alternative to grass, plant wildflowers** – If you know that you will have little time for lawn and garden maintenance this year, consider replacing some of your grass with a patch of wildflowers. Not only are these flowers attractive and colorful, but they will eliminate the need for mowing and require little more than occasional watering. You will want to remove the grass early in the spring, and prepare the soil for planting once the ground is dry enough to turn over.
77. **Transplant shrubs in the spring** – Spring is definitely the best time of the year for transplanting shrubs and other plants because it's when they are generally still in the dormant phase. To transplant a shrub, prune it as low as possible and tie the branches together to avoid damage. You will need to dig about 12 inches deep and around for each inch of stem thickness. You need to keep as much of the root ball intact as possible when transplanting. Remember to fill the new hole with peat or other organic materials as well as soil in order to help the roots take hold quickly.
78. **When planting shrubs, dig large holes** – When you are planting shrubs, be aware of the size of the root ball. The same goes for trees. In general, you will want to dig a hole that is twice the size of the root ball. If there are some rogue roots keeping the plant or tree from sitting in the hole correctly, feel free to trim the root if necessary. Just be careful to remove only what is absolutely necessary.
79. **Use raised gardens to eliminate drainage problems** – Areas with natively clay soil can wreak havoc on your flower and vegetable gardens. Therefore, you might want to try creating raised beds for planting. Generally, you will need about 12 inches of good soil for planting most plants and vegetables. Create the raised bed in an area that gets adequate sunshine or shade depending on what you are planning to plant. Be sure to start prepping raised beds as early as possible in the spring in order to ensure properly cultivated soil.
80. **Create a mini greenhouse to start planting earlier** – If you want or need to get your plants into the ground earlier, it is possible to create a mini-greenhouse over the flower or vegetable beds by placing stakes around the perimeter and covering the entire thing with heavy clear plastic. Keep in mind that this will raise the temperature – but it is not foolproof. This green housing technique is very effective for raised flowerbeds and vegetable gardens.
81. **For fewer weed, consider a raised planting bed** – If you know that your weeding time is sparse, or that you are just not as good as you need to be at keeping after pesky weeds, a raised planting bed may be the solution you have been looking for. Generally, a raised bed is created on top of the ground in a container or with a base

material of some sort. Therefore, there is a lower chance of weeds appearing in the first place. If you have properly prepared the soil for planting, you should be very pleased with the results.

82. **Plan early for a continuous harvest** – If you are planning a vegetable garden, take some time to research what vegetables grow well in your area, and find out when approximately they will be ready for harvest. Then, time the planting of each variety of vegetable according to its harvest time so that you will have fresh produce throughout the summer.
83. **Plan for herb gardens early** – If you are new to herb gardening, you will be wise to select only a few herbs to start with. Herbs require a lot of upkeep, and you don't want to get overwhelmed from the beginning. Consider growing your herbs in existing flowerbeds or vegetable gardens that you are already used to maintaining.
84. **If planting herbs, raise the pH** – Herbs are one of the plant varieties that require a higher than normal pH in the soil to thrive. If you are planning to plant herbs in your garden, or even in pots, make sure that the soil pH is around 6.0 to 7.5. You can achieve this by adding powdered lime to the soil. If planting herbs with other plants, be sure that the other plants will be able to thrive with the higher pH.
85. **Hold off on planting annuals** – Although you may begin seeing annuals for sale as early as late winter, you should be careful to not plant them in your flower beds until after the last frost. The reason is that many annuals will become damaged if exposed to low temperatures. In most areas of the country, May 1st is a good date to keep in mind. You should get them into the ground as soon as possible once you have purchased the plants but you are better off keeping them indoors if you fear freezing temperatures. In a pinch, you can cover your annuals with a heavy blanket to keep in heat should a cold front pass through at some point after you have planted them.
86. **Make sure soil is dry before planting annuals** – In order to achieve maximum growth, your annuals should be planted in drier soil. You should make sure that your soil contains plenty of organic material to promote water retention once the plants are in the ground, however. The roots of these plants tend to take to the soil better when it is dry, but be sure to water thoroughly after planting.
87. **Use cocoa shell mulch to keep weeds away from your flowers** – Lightweight mulch made from ground cocoa shells can be an effective way to deter weeds in your flower garden. Mix it into the soil before planting for the best result. Annuals prefer not to lose valuable water and nutrients to weeds, and they will not thrive in competition, therefore it is imperative to keep weeds to a minimum.
88. **Start your annual seeds indoors** – Starting annuals from seeds is cheaper than purchasing plants. Therefore, many people prefer to plant seeds in their garden. But, starting annuals from seed is difficult in the garden. Therefore, take time in the early

spring to begin seeding these plants indoors and ensure that they get plenty of sun and water to make them as hearty as possible prior to transplanting in the ground.

89. **If you are a novice gardener, opt for perennials** – There are many benefits to adding perennial plants to your landscape. For one thing, they come back every year. They also require less maintenance than annuals and are less expensive. Consider daylilies, black-eyed susans and hostas when looking for low maintenance options.
90. **Decide on a color scheme in advance** – Knowing what your color scheme will be will help you to select the right plants for your landscape. Consider the plants which perform best in your climate and find out the color options. Generally, more common colors will be less expensive than hybrid varieties. If cost is a consideration, keep this in mind.
91. **Always buy from a reputable seller** – If you are purchasing annuals, perennials or vegetable plants for your landscape, be sure to always purchase from a reputable seller. Many national home and garden chain stores carry a wide variety of plants and offer a limited guarantee. If you are buying from a small local greenhouse, ask about their guarantee policy.
92. **For energy efficient gardens, you need to plan carefully** – If you are concerned about the amount of water that you will need for your garden throughout the summer, consider developing a slope plan before you start planting. Taller plants will provide shade for shorter plants, reducing the amount of water required. And, replacing grass with wild grasses and wildflowers will eliminate the need for mowing.
93. **Consider adding productive plants to your landscape** – Many people are starting to incorporate plants that produce edible fruits and vegetables into their decorative landscapes. Some ideas to consider are blueberry bushes, quince plants and other fruit producing shrubs. Not only do these plants produce fresh produce throughout the summer months, but they are pretty to look at as well.
94. **Start planning for structure gardens early** – If you are considering adding a trellis or other garden structure to your garden this year, start planning early. Not only will you need time to construct the structure, but you will need to get any climbing plants in place as early as possible for optimal performance and growth.
95. **Check your lawn's pH** – Grass prefers a pH slightly higher than most plants. Therefore, check your lawn's pH to see that it is between 6.5 and 7.0. If it is too low, consider adding lime to your fertilizer or even when you are overseeding. You can purchase a lawn pH test at any lawn supply store, or you can ask a landscape company to come and test your soil for you.
96. **Make sure that you have the best type of grass** - There are many different varieties of grass available, and not every type is suited to every climate and soil type. Therefore, if you are noticing that your grass is not performing as well as you would

like, take some time to research which grasses perform best in your location. It's not necessary to remove your current grass, just overseed with the new variety whenever you notice a need for replenishment.

97. **Avoid chemicals for an environmentally sound garden** – If you are concerned that the chemicals you might use on your lawn and garden could be harmful to wildlife or the environment in general, take time now to investigate organic alternatives to traditional lawn and garden products. There are many options available, and you are certain to find the right combination for your specific situation.
98. **Divide fall bloomers in the spring** – Early spring is a great time to begin separating fall blooming perennials which have grown too large for their current space. Dividing these plants is simple, just dig out the roots and divide the ball in half. Then replant in another location.
99. **Know your trees** – If you have any trees that have been affected by leaf spot disease or other ailments, it is a good idea to prune off thin branches and excess growth in the spring. This allows for plenty of air circulation and adequate nutrition. If your trees or shrubs seem unhealthy, find out what is wrong so that the problem does not spread to other plants in your lawn and garden.
100. **Determine planting order in advance** – When planting your garden, it is important to place large plants first and the smallest plants last. Be sure to take this into consideration when planning your gardens this spring. If you want to include a specific plant, but are not sure of it's fully grown size, now is the time to find out!
101. **Don't forget about including space in your landscape design** – Sometimes, open space is just as important as the space filled by plants and trees. Don't forget to plan for plenty of space in your design. Remember that in order for many plants to flourish, they need plenty of air circulation and room to grow.