

This Month in the Garden

April Tasks

For many of us, working in the garden is a true escape from all our cares. Spring is a wonderful time to be outdoors and April is National Garden Month. Here are some tasks you might consider for your to-do list.

- If you are not already doing so, you might start keeping a gardening journal. In particular, track what blooms at what time. Do you have blooms galore in April and then nothing for the rest of the year? If so, you might want to add some late bloomers to your garden. Use the [Earth-Kind Plant Selector](#) to help you identify some good choices.
- Plant some warm season annuals to brighten the less boisterous parts of your garden. Begonias, petunias, pentas (butterflies love these!), cosmos, and many others can be found at a nursery near you. [This guide](#) will help you with that.
- If you haven't planted tomatoes yet, your time is running out. Get them in quick and [follow these tips for tomato success!](#)
- Fruit trees might be sending up water sprouts that need to be pruned. Water sprouts typically come from the trunk or older branches. Learn [proper pruning techniques](#).
- Spring-blooming trees and shrubs such as redbud, bridal wreath, and Texas mountain laurel can be pruned once they are past their bloom season. Although little pruning may be needed, you should prune dead branches or branches that rub against each other or other things. Learn [how to prune with purpose](#).
- Now is a good time to prune winter blooming shrubs like camellias, bridal wreath (Spirea), and others whose bloom season is over. Learn [more](#).
- If you have an arbor or other structure you would like to see covered with vines, this month is a great time to plant those vines. Vines can provide shade, noise abatement and privacy. Learn more at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/beaumont/vines.html>.
- Roses, shrubs and trees will have a greater chance to thrive if they are planted before the heat of summer. Planting now may save some heartache later. Follow these [landscape installation tips for greater success](#).
- If you have summer- and fall-blooming perennial flowers that do not bloom the way they once did, perhaps they need to be divided. Do so now before their blooming season starts. Watch this [short video to learn how to divide perennials](#).



Red Pentas



Tomato Vine

- Check your automated irrigation system. If there has been recent rain, you may not need to have it on. If it has been more than 2 weeks since it rained, you may need to provide about ½ to 1 inch of water to your yard and your young shrubs, roses, or trees. However, before you do, make sure the plants need it. If they appear to be thriving, you can wait. Too much water or fertilizer is known to cause certain turf diseases. Learn more about [brown patch, take-all root rot and other lawn problems](#).
- With the warmer weather, you can now patch places in your turf or lay a new lawn. Learn the [best tips for selecting and laying sod](#).
- April is the month to plant many summer vegetables, including cantaloupe, cucumber, eggplant, muskmelon, okra, southern peas, pepper, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, squash, and watermelon. Refer to the [Fort Bend County Vegetable Garden Planting Dates](#) for a year around guide.
- With the return of warmer weather, you may also see the return of ants to your yard. Not all ants are bad and not all need to be treated. However, the reddish fire ants may need to be treated, especially if you or your children walk in the yard. Learn the recommended practice to controlling these pests, called the [Texas Two-Step Method](#).
- If you have butterfly plants, you might spot caterpillars eating those plants. Before you reach for the bug spray, remember those caterpillars might be your baby butterflies. If you need information about how to control insect pests in your garden, including insecticidal oils and how to identify beneficial insects, here are [fact sheets about garden pests from Texas A&M](#).
- Finally, celebrate Earth Day on April 22, 2020. Learn ways to celebrate from <https://www.earthday.org/take-action-now/> .

April Color in Fort Bend County

Let's start with our Texas Superstar® of the Month: Duranta (*Duranta erecta*), also known as Golden Dewdrop or Brazilian Sky Flower. There are about 30 varieties of Duranta but all have these characteristics:

- Grows in sun or shade but blooms best in full sun
- Mostly evergreen foliage in shades from dark green to green/yellow variegated
- Blooms begin in spring and go through first frost
- Blue, white or purple flowers attract both butterflies and hummingbirds
- Some varieties' berries provide food for birds in the fall.

Duranta erecta is one of the most popular varieties of Duranta. Different cultivars grow to different heights with the largest growing to 8 – 10 feet tall and wide.



Duranta

For more information about Duranta, visit <http://texassuperstar.com/plants/duranta/index.html> .

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Here are some other blooms to brighten your April. We can't wait to see some of these beauties in our gardens.

- [Hinckley's Columbine](#) (*Aquilegia chrysantha* var. *hinckleyana*): This perennial small shrub has yellow blooms in winter and spring and grows well in part sun or shade.
- Wormwood (*Artemisia* sp.): A Texas native, this shrub is blooming this month but its real attraction is its aromatic, silver foliage that is lovely as a contrast year-around. It is highly heat tolerant and evergreen (or eversilver, if you wish). The foliage is also used in wreaths. Learn more about [growing herbs in our area](#).
- [Knock Out Rose](#)® (*Rose 'Radrazz'*): Both a Texas Superstar® and a Texas Earth-Kind® Rose, it is disease-resistant, nematode-resistant, evergreen, perennial, and has an exceptionally long bloom season. What's not to like?
- [Mystic Spires Blue Salvia](#) (*Salvia longispicata* x *farinacea* 'Mystic Spires Blue'): This Texas Superstar is a perennial with true blue flowers on spikes up to 30 inches tall. It grows in full sun and is tolerant of heat and humidity. Bees love it!

The Fort Bend Master Gardeners demonstration gardens are currently undergoing renovation but feel free to visit our demonstration gardens for ideas. We do request that you keep your distance from Master Gardeners as they work in the gardens (for their safety and to make sure they keep working). For more information, look on our website at <https://fbmg.org/demonstration-gardens/>.



Knock Out Rose



Salvia