

PP&R'S SPRING CHECKLIST FOR YOUR HOME GARDEN!

- Cut back old plant growth and pull weeds.
- Suppress future weeds with burlap, straw (without seeds) or a top dressing of compost.
- Plan your season; make a reasonable timeline for yourself, choose crops, and figure out how much space each will use.
- Sharpen and clean your tools.
- Purchase seeds (local & organic when possible).
- Purchase or make a good complete organic fertilizer and foliar feed.
- Test for soil moisture.
- Turn the soil and break up clods – best done when the soil has dried out.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. Make a plan

Vegetables have different starting dates – some do well in cool temperatures, while others prefer warmer soil. These soil temperatures, along with the amount of space they need, and "days to maturity," will be written on the back of the seed packets.

2. Check your soil

Portland's winter rains will compact garden soils and deplete it of important nutrients for your new plants. Before cultivating the soil in the spring, you'll want to test the soil for moisture. Working the soil when it's too wet can cause soil compaction and hinder seed germination and root development. Adding organic matter is necessary to help the soil's fertility as well as the texture.

A simple method you can try:

1. Dig a hole 6"- 8" deep and form a ball of soil the size of a golf ball.
2. Toss the ball about 1 foot in the air and catch it with a flat/open hand. If the soil crumbles when it lands, then your soil is ready for planting. If it stays in a ball then your soils still needs to dry out.

3. Add organic material and nutrients to your soil

When your soil is dry enough to work, add 2 inches of compost and a complete organic fertilizer to help boost production. Turn it into the top six inches of soil with a digging fork. Always follow the application rate recommended on the fertilizer container. You can also do a [soil fertility test](#) to learn what kind of nutrients are lacking in your soil.

4. Plant your garden

March and April are months to sow early spring crops in the garden like: radish, arugula, peas, spinach, swiss chard, potatoes, lettuce, carrots, broccoli, cabbage, beets. See [Oregon Tilth's planting calendar](#) for a detailed list of what you can plant.

Seed sowing tips:

- Plant seeds to a depth of three or four times their thickness.
- Keep seeds constantly moist until true leaves appear.
- Vegetables that prefer to be planted from seed in your garden rather than transplanted are: Roots (beets, carrot, radish, etc.), Greens (lettuce, arugula, spinach, salad mix), Legumes (peas, beans, etc.), and Garlic.
- Remember to "thin" emerged seedlings to their proper spacing requirement (as listed on seed package). Thinning will allow nutrients to go directly to the selected seedling.
- Plant a combination of plant starts and seeds at the same time to provide a successive harvest.

5. Start a garden journal and keep records

Keep a simple garden journal of what and when you plant and which amendments you add to your soil. Draw a simple map of your plot that you can take notes on throughout the year. This will provide you with valuable information to aid in future garden planning.