

- ❖ Plant spring bulbs such as daffodils and tulips in late fall.
  - To encourage good bloom again next year, remove the faded blossoms but do NOT cut back the withering foliage until it comes away easily with a tug. Camouflage it with a later emerging plant.
  - These can be left in place from year to year.

**Lawns**

- ❖ Don't start mowing in the spring until the grass is actively growing and is at least 8-9cm tall.
  - Mow high all season - not shorter than 7-8 cm.
  - Don't cut more than 1/3 of the length at a time.
  - Leave short clippings on the lawn.
  - Rake up long clippings and add to compost.
- ❖ Water lawn deeply once a week if insufficient rain.
- ❖ Fertilize three or four times per year - pay careful attention to the instructions and the total used for the year.
- ❖ To repair bare patches and smooth out bumps, rake on a thin layer of triple mix (this is called top-dressing), then over-seed heavily with grass seed. This is best done in early fall or any time the soil and air temperatures are at least 15°C - the temperature at which grass seed germinates. Water well as it establishes.
  - Remove weeds by hand first.
  - If the soil is compacted, aerate first.
  - Consider mixing in some white Dutch clover for biodiversity.
- ❖ If your lawn has problem levels of grubs, beneficial nematodes (microscopic worm-like organisms that parasitize grubs and larvae) can be used to control them. Apply in August, 4-6 weeks after the June bugs were on the wing. Water in thoroughly.
- ❖ Rake fallen leaves from the lawn and add to the compost or use to protect tender plants. Alternatively, mow over them with a mulching attachment and leave on the lawn.

**Ponds**

- ❖ When the ice is gone, clean out debris. Install and start the pump to circulate the water.
- ❖ Start feeding the fish in spring when the water temperature reaches 10°C. Stop feeding in the fall when the water temperature drops below 10°C.
- ❖ Add floating plants to shade the water and reduce algae growth.
- ❖ Remove debris and deadhead plants regularly.
- ❖ In late fall, remove the pump, clean and store it for winter. Install a de-icer or a bubbler to keep the water open during winter to allow gases from decomposing plant material to escape.

**Definitions**

**Beneficial insects** - bees and other pollinators, as well as predatory insects which help control garden pests.  
**Organic matter** - decomposed plant or animal matter. In garden terms this would include well-rotted manure, compost, shredded leaves, bark mulch, etc.

**How much sun is "full sun"?**  
 Full sun: more than 6 hours of direct sun per day  
 Part shade: 4-6 hours of sun per day  
 Shade: less than 4 hours of sun per day

**Harden off** - to acclimatize an inside plant to outdoor conditions, take it outside each day for several days, exposing it for longer and longer periods. This will decrease the likelihood of sun and wind burn.

**Safe planting date - for several days after the average last frost date for your area (see chart below), it would NOT be a surprise to have at least a light frost overnight (-2°C). You can harden off your frost-tender seedlings during this time period but wait at least two weeks before transplanting them, and even then, you should be prepared to cover them if the forecast calls for frost.**

**Zones (2000 Canada Plant Hardiness Map) Frost date averages (Environment Canada)**

**Note:** There is still a 50% chance of frost after the average last frost date and before the average first frost date.

City	Zone	Average last frost	Average first frost
Hearst	1b	June 15	Sept 1
Timmins	2a	June 8	Sept 6
Thunder Bay	3a	June 1	Sept 15
North Bay	3b-4a	May 19	Sept 24
Sudbury	4a	May 17	Sept 25
Ottawa	4b-5a	May 6	Oct 5
Parry Sound	4b-5a	May 17	Sept 28
Barrie	5a	May 26	Sept 16
Peterborough	5a	May 18	Sept 20
Newmarket	5a	May 25	Sept 25
Kitchener	5a-5b	May 11	Sept 29
Owen Sound	5b	May 12	Oct 15
Kingston	5b	May 2	Oct 10
Cornwall	5b	May 4	Oct 9
Toronto	6a	May 9	Oct 6
London	6a	May 9	Oct 8
Sarnia	6a	May 6	Oct 15
Hamilton	6a	April 29	Oct 15
St Catharines	6b	May 2	Oct 17
Windsor	6b	April 25	Oct 22

Do you want more gardening information?  
 Check the Reference Manual for Ontario Gardeners:  
<http://mgoi.ca/education/referencemanual.html>

**MASTER GARDENERS OF NIAGARA**

**SHAW GUILD GARDEN TOUR**  
 Niagara-on-the-Lake  
 in June

**FALL PLANT SALE**  
 Vineland Research & Innovation Centre  
 1st Saturday after Labour Day  
 in September  
 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Horticultural questions?**

✉ [mgofniagara@gmail.com](mailto:mgofniagara@gmail.com) **or**  
 ☎ **the HOTLINE 905 646 2818**





**The Great Ontario Garden Guide**

*Prepared by*  
**Master Gardeners of Ontario**



Do you have a garden question?  
**ASK US!!**

To find a Master Gardener group in your area:  
 check <http://mgoi.ca>

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION  
**landscapeontario.com**  
*Green for Life!*

Reproduction or replication of this Guide is not permitted without the express written consent of MGOI. [communications@mgoi.ca](mailto:communications@mgoi.ca)

Registered Charity Number: 871150967RR0001  
 Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc 2014

NOTE: Find definitions for underlined terms on other side.

## Houseplants

- ❖ DO NOT overwater - it can kill the plant!
  - Stick your finger into the soil about 2cm - if it feels dry and no soil sticks to your finger, water the plant.
  - Improve humidity by misting foliage with tepid water or setting plants on a tray of pebbles which is kept moist.
- ❖ Fertilize regularly when plants are actively growing - follow instructions on the package.
- ❖ Check for bugs every time you water.
  - Spray with insecticidal soap if you see aphids, white flies or spider mites. Rinse off after 20 minutes.
  - Use rubbing alcohol on a Q-tip to remove scale or mealy bugs - apply directly on the pest and not over the whole plant.
- ❖ Many houseplants can be moved outdoors in summer.
  - Choose location based on light and wind conditions. Put cacti and succulents in a rain shadow.
  - **Harden off** first.
  - Remove the saucers under pots for better drainage.
  - Repot when it is necessary to increase pot size or refresh potting medium. Prune the roots if you are keeping it in the same size pot.
- ❖ Bring the plants back inside about two weeks before the average first frost date for your area (see chart).
  - Quarantine them for a few days to make sure they are pest free.
  - Don't worry if some leaves drop - this is normal when the plant returns to the drier indoor environment.

## Soil quality

- ❖ Healthy soil leads to healthy plants and lawns.
- ❖ Plants take nutrients from the soil. In nature, plant debris is left on the soil to decay which returns these nutrients. Every crop harvested and bit of debris removed to keep gardens tidy takes nutrients away. Replace them by adding **organic matter** to the soil regularly. This will also improve the structure of the soil, improve drainage in clay soils, increase moisture retention in sandy soils, and increase the activity of beneficial soil organisms.
- ❖ Build a compost pile in an area with **part shade**.
  - Add carbon-rich brown materials (such as dry leaves, wood chips, shredded paper, soil) and nitrogen-rich green material (such as plant debris, kitchen scraps) in layers - twice as much brown as green.
  - Do NOT add meat scraps, pet waste, diseased foliage or weedy seed heads.
  - Keep it damp and turn it with a fork every week or so.

- It is ready to be added to the soil when it is uniformly crumbly and black, looks and smells like soil.
- ❖ Mulch garden beds - it suppresses weeds and helps re-tain moisture. Use an organic material such as composted bark which supplies nutrient to the soil as it breaks down. Use gravel on xeric (dry) beds or alpine gardens.

## Trees and shrubs

- ❖ Before you buy, check the plant tag for hardiness zone (see chart for your zone). Check its light and moisture requirements. Be mindful of these factors when you place it. Consider also its size when mature.
- ❖ When the temperature is above 10°C and before bud break, apply dormant oil spray to fruit trees, shrubs and roses to smother over-wintering insects.
- ❖ Feed trees by applying **organic matter** over the root zone annually - but not more than 5cm deep.
- ❖ Ensure that newly planted trees and shrubs are watered regularly all season, right until freeze-up.
- ❖ Water established trees and shrubs during drought.
- ❖ Water evergreens during the fall so they go into the winter well hydrated - this can reduce risk of desiccation and other winter injury.
- ❖ Sometime after Hallowe'en and before the ground freezes, apply winter protection:
  - Put a shelter of burlap or felt around broadleaf evergreens and tender shrubs to protect them from drying winter sun and wind.
  - Wrap tree trunks with a plastic collar or apply a repellent from the base to a point above the snowline to prevent rabbits and mice from eating the bark.
  - Put up a barrier that will protect evergreens that are within reach of salty road spray.
- ❖ Remove winter protections around the time the snow is gone for good. Do it on an overcast day.

## Pruning - Trees, shrubs and vines

- ❖ The 5Ds of pruning: remove limbs that might be dangerous, take out any dead, diseased or damaged branches and finally, consider the overall design or shape of the plant when deciding which branches to remove.
- ❖ Don't prune more than 1/3 of a tree/shrub annually.
- ❖ Prune summer blooming shrubs (*Spirea*, *Weigela*, dogwood, etc.) as they leaf out.
- ❖ Prune spring bloomers (lilac, *Magnolia*, *Forsythia*, etc.) right after they bloom. Many of these set buds during the summer for next year's bloom.
- ❖ Deciduous trees (including fruit trees) should be pruned when dormant.

- Maple, birch and beech bleed if pruned when dormant. This is messy but not damaging. Prune after they leaf out to avoid this.
- ❖ Prune conifers when the new growth appears.
  - Reduce size and encourage denser growth by pinching out up to 2/3rds of each candle on pines and spruces.
  - Cedar hedges should be pruned in mid-summer.
- ❖ Hedges should be pruned so the base is wider than the top to allow light to reach the lower branches.
- ❖ Established vines need pruning to improve light and air circulation, reduce volume and keep them vigorous.
  - Remove tangled or weak stems and those growing away from the support.
  - Vines grown for their fruit, such as grapes, should be pruned while dormant. Prune back to renewal buds.
  - Vines grown for their foliage, such as ivies and Virginia creeper, can be pruned at any time.
  - Prune vines that flower on old wood, such as Wisteria, when they finish blooming.
  - Prune vines that flower on new wood, such as honey-suckle, in early spring.
- ❖ When to prune a Clematis vine depends on its growth habit - check the nursery tag:
  - If it blooms only in spring on old wood - prune lightly when it finishes flowering.
  - If it blooms only in summer on new wood - cut back to the lowest pair of green buds in early spring.
  - Some cultivars bloom early on old wood AND later on new wood: prune lightly when dormant and again more heavily after the early bloom.

## Vegetables

- ❖ Choose a **full sun** location for growing vegetables - incorporate them into perennial borders if space is short.
- ❖ Mix in liberal amounts of compost or rotted manure after fall clean-up or well before planting in spring.
- ❖ Start seed indoors under lights 6 to 8 weeks before usual **safe planting date** (or buy seedlings): peppers, cauliflower, tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli, etc.
  - **Harden off** before transplanting.
- ❖ Plant seeds of cool weather crops (such as spinach, lettuces, carrots, peas) directly in the garden two to three weeks before **safe planting date**. Plant potato eyes and onion sets at this time too.
- ❖ Plant seeds of warm weather crops (such as radishes, beans, cucumbers) directly in the garden after **safe planting date**.
- ❖ Plant garlic in the fall for harvest next year.

- ❖ Thin rows as seedlings emerge and as they grow on - to give their roots room and allow for good air circulation.
- ❖ Keep the vegetable patch weed-free.
- ❖ Apply compost as side-dressing for heavy feeders like corn and onions.
- ❖ Watch for free-loading insect pests - squash them or pick off and dump into a container of soapy water.
- ❖ Encourage **beneficial insects** by growing food and nectar sources and providing water.

## Flowers - perennials and annuals

- ❖ Start annual seeds indoors under lights in February, March or April according to package instructions. **Harden off** before transplanting.
- ❖ In early spring, when the soil is dry enough to walk on, clean up garden debris and add to compost.
  - OR do this in fall as foliage withers but leave some seed heads for winter interest and food for the birds.
- ❖ As the days get warmer and growth begins, watch for insect pests such as sawfly larvae and lily beetles. Remove and destroy!
- ❖ Early in season, side-dress perennial beds with compost. Be careful not to disturb the roots or bury the crowns.
- ❖ Plant annuals in decorative pots for accents in the yard.
  - Refresh the growing medium each season.
  - Check containers daily to see if they need water.
  - Fertilize every 2 weeks.
  - Remove faded blossoms.
  - Remove plants at the end of the season. Clean and store containers out of the weather.
- ❖ Plant summer blooming bulbs (such as dahlias and canna lilies) directly in the garden after **safe planting date**.
  - For earlier bloom, start indoors in pots in March.
  - Lift the bulbs after foliage has been blackened by frost. Clean, sort and store in barely moist peat moss in a cool (no risk of freezing) dark spot for use next year.
- ❖ Deadhead annuals to encourage continuous blooms but leave some toward the end of the season to allow for self-seeding or seed collection.
- ❖ Deadhead perennials to prolong bloom period.
- ❖ Perennials clump up or spread and most will eventually need dividing.
  - Divide late blooming perennials such as hostas and daylilies in the spring just as they emerge.
  - Divide early blooming perennial such as irises and peonies in early fall.
  - Water transplants until they have established.
- ❖ Investigate what kind of protection roses and other tender plants need in your area.