



## This Month in the Garden

Peggy Koppmann

April brings rain, income Tax Day, Easter, and Peanut Butter and Jelly Day. (Who knew?) But it also brings us back to the garden as the season gets underway in full swing. Dust off your spade, find your garden gloves, and go get your boots muddy in the April garden.

**Barely There** — Plant your bare-root roses in the ground by **April 15** to give them time to develop a strong root system before the leaves appear. Plant once the soil thaws and is still cool, but not too wet and the daytime temps are still under 70 degrees F. Take a look at the WNY Rose Society website, [wnyrosesociety.net](http://wnyrosesociety.net) or any rose vendor for planting information. While you're in a 'rosy mood', check out 'Desdemona' and 'The Ancient Mariner', two new roses from David Austin Roses for 2017. Beautiful.

**Feedin' Time** — Dig in a layer of compost or well-rotted manure into beds. Feed recently-planted trees, shrubs and hedges with a balanced slow-release fertilizer by digging it into the soil surface. Older established plantings probably don't need a feeding. Feed the roses and start to keep a chart of your feeding times for reference during the summer. The first rose feeding should come right after your spring pruning using a 5-10-5 fertilizer at the rate of 1 cup for each established bush. Scratch it into the top layer of soil and water well.

**Critter Control** — As the weather warms, it's time to scout for the buff-colored

eggs of the gypsy moth on trees, stones, fences, and protected places. Eastern tent caterpillar eggs are found in a brownish mass that looks like a raisin squeezed around a twig. The eggs hatch at bud break, so act early and scrape them off and crush on the ground. Watch for evidence of damage from slugs, cutworms, aphids and other common pests.

Check with [rodalorganiclife.com](http://rodalorganiclife.com) or [motherearthnews.com](http://motherearthnews.com) for non-pesticide solutions. You can find a recipe for Garlic Oil spray on [thespruce.com](http://thespruce.com).

**Lawn Laws** — Well, there are none, but there are lots of (sometimes conflicting) bits of advice on caring for your lawn. Now, Cornell is stepping in to clarify recommendations on their comprehensive website, [turf.cals.cornell.edu/lawn](http://turf.cals.cornell.edu/lawn). The section on Lawn Care: *The Easiest Steps to an Attractive Environmental Asset* provides info, videos, pdf files, and photos to answer most of your lawn questions. Of particular interest is the section titled "Do Less" which recommends skipping spring feeding of your lawn if you have a thick, vigorous grass layer. Take a look at this important site and bookmark it for reference. And then, there is the increasingly popular option — reduce your lawn and grow plants that support bugs, birds, and butterflies.

**Yes, You Can** — Plant these later in the month: peas, potatoes, onions, spinach, lettuce and parsnips. Be sure that your soil is ready to work and passes the squeeze test. If you squeeze a handful of soil and it sticks together, it's too wet to plant. Wait until your squeezed handful crumbles easily to plant. Planting in soil

that is too wet may cause compaction and poor drainage later in the season.

**And then —** Finish cleaning your beds; Plant out seedlings of cauliflower, cabbage and broccoli when the soil is workable; plant strawberries; fertilize fruit trees; repot houseplants and increase fertilizing; divide perennials when growth is 3-4" high; divide hostas before they come into leaf; WEED; stake clematis; mark the spot where you're going to plant a tree for Arbor Day. 🌱



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