

The 2021 Almanac: A Monthly Gardening Schedule

Now that I've been gardening in Iowa for over 40 years, it seemed an appropriate stage in my life to construct a personal gardening schedule, reminding me not to forget various gardening tasks throughout the year. Although much of this work is determined by the weather, some tasks—such as sowing seeds and transplanting—must often operate within a rather tight time frame. I thought a simple chart might help me stay on track. In this chart I have identified a specific target date for some tasks, but for most items I've simply identified the month when a job probably needs to be done. In constructing this schedule, I have consulted a variety of resources (garden journals, websites, books, etc), but this almanac is primarily based on my own inclinations and experiences with several Zone 5a vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens in east-central Iowa, 850-900' above sea level. My monthly chart of gardening tasks is separated into three columns: indoor greenhouse, outdoor vegetables/fruit, and outdoor flowers/shrubs. ~Bob

Month	Indoor Greenhouse	Outdoor Vegetables/ Fruit	Outdoor Flowers/ Shrubs
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order Vegetable/Flower seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create vegetable garden map indicating which vegetables will be planted in which beds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study my perennial flower bed maps and determine where new flowers and shrubs will be planted.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove Coe greenhouse shade cover to maximize sunlight <p>1: Sow flower seeds: delphinium, dianthus, digitalis</p> <p>15: Sow onions, leeks, parsley, spinach, celeriac</p> <p>–Flower seeds: Asclepias</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean up garden Remove dead asparagus growth Spread paper & straw for paths and borders of raised beds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune fruit trees Remove any leaves or debris from rock and crevice gardens
March	<p>1: Sow flower seeds: gaillardia, helianthus, hollyhock, lupine, petunia, rudbeckia, salvia, snapdragon, stock</p> <p>15: Sow eggplants, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi</p> <p>–Flower seeds: calendula, celosia, coleus, cosmos, Iceland poppy, larkspur, marigold, phlox, ptilotus, statice, sweet peas</p>	<p>1: Begin sowing spinach, radish, lettuce; continue every 2 weeks</p> <p>15: Fertilize asparagus, add compost, cover soil with fresh mulch (miscanthus)</p> <p>25: Remove straw mulch from strawberries, garlic, parsnips</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune yews, dogwood, Russian sage, wisteria, grape vines, & raspberries Spread compost/mulch in flower borders and around shrubs Hoe, rake, and remove weeds from gravel walkways Cut back ornamental grasses
April	<p>1: Sow peppers, tomatoes, basil</p> <p>–Flower seeds: scabiosa, tithonia</p> <p>5: Remove dahlia tubers from storage and plant in pots</p> <p>20: Sow cucumbers & melons</p>	<p>15: Begin to sow peas, lettuce, carrots (soil 45F); transplant spinach</p> <p>20: Sow beets & parsnips (soil 50F),</p> <p>--Plant potatoes, onion sets</p> <p>--Transplant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, parsley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to harvest rhubarb & asparagus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune forsythia after blooming Begin lawn mowing; don't mow lawn with crocus until leaves have withered Hoe, rake, and remove weeds from gravel walkways
May	<p>1: Sow flower seeds: morning glory and annuals to be sold in June Rummage Sale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transplant dahlias to outdoors after last frost; same with peacock orchids Be on constant lookout for disease and unwanted insects in greenhouse. Install fresh yellow sticky sheets for capturing flying insects. 	<p>1: Acclimate tender seedlings to outdoors</p> <p>--Sow Provider bush beans, kale (soil temp 55F)</p> <p>10: Sow beans (bush & pole)</p> <p>20: Sow cucumbers, zucchini, squash, melons, pumpkins, okra, lima beans (soil temp 65F)</p> <p>--Transplant tomatoes, peppers, celeriac</p> <p>25: Transplant eggplants, cucumber, melons, sweet potatoes (soil temp 65F)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune most strawberry runners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin direct seeding of annual flowers: zinnia, cosmos, cleomes, larkspur, tithonia, plains coreopsis Deadhead tulips and daffodils after blooming Fertilize hellebores with fertilizer high in potash Move potted plants outdoors Hoe, rake, and remove weeds from gravel walkways Fertilize lawn
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize vegetable/flower giveaway at Coe greenhouse & garden Plant perennial flowers purchased from online nurseries Recover Coe greenhouse with shade material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvest fruit: strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants Harvest vegetables: beans, peas, beets, lettuce, radishes Frequently check vegetable plants (zucchini, cucumbers, beans, squash, potatoes, eggplants) for cucumber/squash bugs and Colorado potato beetles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After blooming, prune lilacs, bridal wreath, weigela, wisteria Deadhead peony blooms and cut back taller, late-blooming asters, goldenrod After blooming, dig up, separate, and replant flag iris & Siberian iris Continue to sow annuals (e.g., zinnia) Begin the hunt for Japanese beetles

July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough cleaning of greenhouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove cane of raspberries, weed beds, fresh compost/mulch • Harvest beans, peas, new potatoes, carrots, beets, cukes • Check on blackberries and prune grape vines • Don't forget about bugs/beetles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut back lady's mantle and other flowers after bloom cycle • Hunt and kill Japanese beetles • Hoe, rake, and remove weeds from gravel walkways
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sow flower seeds to grow plants for the church rummage sale in October. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-10: Plant fall garden: peas, lettuce, spinach, radish, beets, carrots • Harvest garlic, onions when tops fall over, and potatoes when tops are dead • Harvest beans, tomatoes, okra, cucumbers, melons, carrots, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoe, rake, and remove weeds from gravel walkways
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use trimmings of herbs and flowers to start new plants: lavender, geraniums, Moses-in-the-cradle, mint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest potatoes, lettuce, peas, squash, melons, beets, carrots, beans, tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, lima beans, raspberries, grapes, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilize lawn • Dig up, separate, and replant congested perennials.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sow annual flower seeds for indoor blooming plants during winter months • Sow lettuce and greens to be grown in greenhouse for late fall salads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest sweet potatoes, cabbage, kale, peas, spinach, lettuce, carrots, parsnips • Plant garlic (preferably a month before ground freezes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on weather, move tender potted plants indoors • Dig up and store dahlia tubers after first hard freeze • Plant tulips, daffodils, spring-flowering bulbs • Collect grass and flower seedheads for indoor displays.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and store equipment used for seed sowing, plant propagation, and growing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest parsnips, carrots, parsley • Continue to clean up vegetable beds • Go through current year's garden journal, study planting map, and assess which veggie varieties were successful and which ones were not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final lawn mowing; prepare mower for winter • Sow annual wildflower seeds • Add compost/mulch to flower beds • Cut back and compost dead flowers (e.g., asters, goldenrod, daylilies) • Add compost to raised beds; prepare some beds for early spring planting
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean pots, seed trays, etc • Clean and store all tools • Take inventory of supplies and order items needed for next season of sowing, planting, fertilizing, & harvesting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to clean up vegetable beds if the weather permits. • Study seed catalogs, journals, gardening books, and web sources, seeking recommendations for new garden varieties to plant next year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mulch strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries • Continue weeding and compost dead flowers (e.g., cranesbill, platycodon); leave seedheads for birds (e.g., purple coneflower, rudbeckia, grasses)