

## **Plan Now for Your Spring Garden**

Taking time off from gardening? During the months of January and February on days when it's too cold to work outside are ideal for doing some planning for future success. Looking at garden catalogs and magazines while sipping hot chocolate can be relaxing, but if you are seriously considering making garden plans, now can be a very productive time to do so. Here are a few items to consider.

- **Educate yourself.** Get the appropriate OSU Fact Sheets for the tasks that you want to accomplish this year with your garden. These can be obtained from the OSU Extension office located at 4116 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Tulsa or any of them can also be downloaded at [www.tulsamastergardeners.org](http://www.tulsamastergardeners.org).
- **What needs to be done to the planting area?** Has the soil been tested for fertility within the last three to four years? If not, a soil test is likely in order. You can get instructions for obtaining a soil test from the Tulsa County Master Gardeners website. For the nominal cost of \$10, it will give you valuable information on any potential nutrient deficiencies in your plot. If soil pH and fertility is good, the soil structure can benefit from adding organic amendments.
- **When can the garden be worked?** Do not try to work the soil when it is wet. And, it's not advised to walk around it then either, as both of those actions cause compaction of the soil which makes it harder to work now and later.
- **What are you going to grow?** If growing vegetables, plan to rotate your crops. For instance, do not plant your tomatoes in the same spot every year. Planting crops in the same place year in and out promotes disease such as nematodes.
- **Growing flowers?** Was your color combination what you desired last year? Are you growing annuals as well as perennials? Want to add a pollinator garden this year? All good questions to be asking. Check out the Oklahoma Proven website at [www.oklahomaproven.org](http://www.oklahomaproven.org) for lots of ideas for trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals.
- **How much sun and how much shade do you have?** Be sure to take this into consideration when making plant selections. Plant sun-loving plants together; plant shade-loving plants together. Mixing the two will likely result in less than optimum results.
- **Do you wish for an easier method of watering the garden?** Plan now to install a drip irrigation system. While a bit of work up front, it will save you a ton of time later . . . and help to lower your water bill. This system gets the water right to the plants' roots where it can be readily used instead on the leaves of the plant. If you already have an irrigation system, inspect it for broken or worn parts and determine if it needs to be expanded.

- **How are your garden tools?** Now is a great time to clean up your garden tools: clean, oil, and sharpen them. Do the same for mowers, edgers, and sprayers. Sterilize all pots you want to re-use this year by soaking them for 15 minutes in a 10% bleach/water solution (one part household bleach to nine parts water). Rinse and let dry.
- **Had any rain lately?** If precipitation is scant, water lawns, trees and shrubs (especially broadleaf and needled evergreens). One inch of snow is equal to about 1/10" of rain. Check moisture levels under eaves and in raised planters. Watering deeply before a predicted hard freeze will reduce the chance of winter damage.
- **Got behind on your fall clean-up?** Pick a pretty day and go out and clean up. It helps to alleviate cabin fever!
- **How about those bulbs?** If you have any unplanted bulbs leftover from the fall, plant them now. They will bloom less reliably and may have shorter stems this year, but should get "recharged" for the following year.

**OSU Fact Sheet Resources:**

[HLA-6004](#) "Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide"

[HLA-6408](#) "Landscape Maintenance Schedule"