



Monthly Checklist

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MARCH

- **GENERAL**
 - Spray dormant oil when temperatures are at least 40 degrees F with no chance of rain or freezing temps for 24 hours
 - Prune trees and shrubs (not evergreens-after new growth, maples-fall, birches-fall or spring blooming shrubs-after flowering)
 - Check any summer blooming bulbs in storage (dahlias, gladiolas, etc)
 - Cut back any perennials or grasses left up for the winter if the weather allows
 - Begin watering evergreens-especially recently planted ones
- **EDIBLES**
 - Start vegetable seeds indoors (see vegetable schedule below)
- **PEST MANAGEMENT**
 - Eriophyid Mites: attack many woody ornamentals by piercing the leaf to feed; the galls formed by this damage are usually cosmetic and rarely cause harm
 - Snow Mold: As the snow melts off your lawn you may notice some straw colored areas, or even fluffy, fungal growth if the area is wet and cold; rake the matted areas to promote quicker drying
 - Gall Insects: commonly seen are those attacking poplars/cottonwoods, blue spruce, burr oak; damage is generally cosmetic; prune out if unsightly
 - Black Knot Disease: fungus that attacks plum and cherry trees (especially common on chokecherries) resulting in black knot galls on the branches; prune out galls before leaves emerge to help prevent the spread

APRIL

- **GENERAL**
 - Wait until the soil has dried out before rototilling or planting to avoid soil compaction
 - Transplant evergreens
 - Prune trees (except maple or birch-prune them in the fall)
 - Remove any tree wraps, burlap, or extra mulch
 - Divide summer and fall blooming perennials
 - Add compost to help lighten heavy soils

- **EDIBLES**

- Start vegetable seeds indoors and sow cool season vegetables outdoors when soil temps are around 50 degrees (see vegetable schedule below)

- **PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Clover Mites: tiny reddish mites with long front legs that sneak into sunny south and southwest facing windows. They are usually most active in cooler weather during spring and fall. These mites can be caught with sticky tape or just vacuumed up, but be careful they can stain clothing and other fabric surfaces. Replacing turf with bark mulch in areas close to your home may also help.
- Western Yellowjacket: One of the more aggressive pests that can both sting and bite. The fertilized queens overwinter and are usually emerging in early spring. Traps containing an attractant are most effective when used early in the season when populations are still low. These traps will also work on other yellowjackets and wasps.
- Pine Needle Scale: Appears as little white specks on evergreen needles, most commonly on spruce, pines, Douglas-fir and fir. Natural enemies will keep low infestations in check but contact sprays can be used during the crawler stage, which occurs around the bloom of the common lilac. Hold a white piece of paper below the infected branches and shake to see if there are any crawlers.
- White Pine Weevil: Found in spruce trees and causes the top to look wilted. When the temperature starts to warm up (mid March) adults will seek out spruce trees to lay eggs. Once hatched the weevils will feed underneath the bark, which can kill the top or leader of the tree. Other branches will then start growing upwards to replace the lost leader. If you are going to prune to rid your tree of this pest make sure to cut off the branches while the larvae is still inside the branch. Insecticides can be used to kill the females in early spring but won't be as effective after the eggs hatch. A systematic treatment in the fall can also help protect the tree.

May

- **GENERAL**

- Plant annuals; protect from frost
- Plant trees, shrubs and perennials
- Fertilize shrubs, trees and perennials
- Prune evergreens
- Spray for fire blight

- **LAWN**

- Fertilize your lawn at the end of the month with our favorite, *PRO-RICH* (This organic based fertilizer is specially formulated to improve the health of your grass)

and soil. A few of the benefits include: increased root growth, long lasting green lawn, reduces thatch, improves disease resistance, reduces weeds in your lawn, helps balance pH and reduces watering requirements.)

- Sow wildflower and grass seed after the soil warms

- **EDIBLES**

- Great time for planting asparagus and rhubarb
- Spray fruit trees after blooming is over
- Codling moth traps can be put out when apple trees are in bloom to monitor for emerging adults
 - [Gardenwerks codling moth recommendations](#)

- **PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Codling Moth: Usually responsible for brown spots and worms in apples and pears. These moths are active around apple bloom and can be sprayed after the petals fall, but to avoid putting pollinators at risk never spray while flowers are in full bloom. Sticky traps can also be used. Make sure to keep the area around your fruit trees cleaned up, disposing of any dropped fruit.
- Nostoc: This cyanobacteria appears as a green jelly-like substance usually in your lawn. It may go unnoticed until damp weather and is usually due to high moisture, soil compaction or too much phosphorus.
- Fire Blight: Trees may have dead branches, blackened leaves, discolored bark, water-soaked blossoms and black “shepherd’s crook” twigs. It is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora* and can affect trees in the Rosaceae family such as apple, crabapple, mountain ash and pear. Be sure to disinfect pruners between each cut if pruning dead or infected branches from multiple trees as the bacteria can spread in this way. More info [here](#).
- Cedar Apple Rust: Appears as galls on the branches or twigs of junipers and is caused by the fungus *Gymnosporangium juniperi-virginianae*. These galls will swell up during the spring when there is a lot of moisture and then produce orange, gelatinous telial horns. Twigs that the galls are attached to may die in late spring when the galls die. This fungus needs an alternate host plant to fulfill its life cycle, such as crab-apples, apples, hawthorn, quince, serviceberry or pear.
- Bacterial Blight of Lilac: This disease is common in late spring and early summer and is caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Syringae*. It can affect all types of lilacs and appears as brown or black spots on the leaves, stems and new shoots. This disease can spread to other plants through insects, contact, splashed irrigation water and pruning. To manage this disease prune out all of the infected branches 6-8 inches below where they show symptoms. Make sure to disinfect your pruners between each cut and dispose of the infected clippings to prevent it spreading.

JUNE

- **GENERAL**

- Stake tall growing perennials
- Provide support for annual and perennial vines
- Apply repellents to emerging perennials if rabbits and deer are a problem; we recommend using a spray or granular form of either Plantskydd or Liquid Fence
- Apply mulch as needed to maintain 2-3" in landscape beds and around trees (remove grass around the base of trees to make room for a mulched area)
- Watering- it's better to irrigate deeply rather than several light watering (see [Care of New Plantings](#) handout)
- Plant summer bulbs when the soil is warm enough (around 60)
- Prune evergreens, hedges, and spring blooming shrubs after they finish flowering
- Cut back bulb foliage after it turns brown
- Fertilize roses

- **LAWN**

- Mow grass 2-3" high for a healthy lawn
- Start irrigating established lawns--a few water saving tips
 - Water lawns early in the morning when the temperatures are cool, the wind is calm and the sun is still low. This prevents water loss and encourages healthy plant growth.
 - Adjust your system based on the season and the weather. Spring and fall water demand is much less than mid summer. Most timers have a seasonal adjust option, or you can manually lower the time on each zone.
 - Water smart. Overwatering lawns is the largest source of outdoor water waste. Bluegrass lawns DO NOT require daily irrigation; an average is 3 times a week. Less frequent, deep watering is ideal if your site and system allow for it. Drip systems should run every 3-5 days depending on temperature and plant maturity.
 - Periodically inspect your system to make sure everything is working and is correctly adjusted.

- **EDIBLES**

- Plant warm season vegetables (see vegetable schedule below)
- Morels: If you're interested in foraging your own food be on the lookout for morels during late spring and early summer. Yellow morels are usually found among cottonwood trees along rivers and other wet areas. They are usually hiding under dead logs and other vegetation. Black morels can usually be found in old burn areas a year or two after the fire. Because there are some convincing look-alikes that aren't recommended as edible, be careful when hunting morels

and make sure to do your research before cooking up what you find.

- ***PEST MANAGEMENT***

- Spruce Budworm: These caterpillars usually start feeding during May and June. Signs on spruce trees such as chewed up needles, silk strands and defoliation may indicate a budworm problem. Although they have natural enemies they can also be sprayed in the spring when trees are pushing out new growth.
- Gummosis: This is a bacterial disease caused by *Pseudomonas Syringae* and can affect all stone fruit trees. It prefers wet, cool and windy environments and can get into plants through wounds or openings in the bark. If your trees are affected, you may notice cankers that produce a gum like substance. To manage this disease prune out and dispose of any infected branches.
- Bronze Birch Borer: These beetles lay eggs so that the larvae can feed beneath the bark of birch trees. If your trees are suffering from these beetles you may notice raised areas on the bark where the larvae is tunneling below its surface. Branches that show signs of these beetles should be pruned out before they mature and come out of the bark. If you have had trouble in the past a preventative application can be used before the females lay their eggs in early June.
- Shot Hole Disease: This disease is caused by the fungus *Wilsonomyces carpophilus* and it affects the prunus species (apricot, peach, cherry, plum etc). You will notice small red spots in the spring that will later turn purple with a white center. When these spots fall out of the leaves they leave a “shot hole”. To help maintain healthy trees keep the surrounding area cleaned up to avoid unwanted fungal growth and make sure to water trees sufficiently during hot and dry months taking care to avoid getting the leaves wet.

JULY

- ***GENERAL***

- To promote a second round of flowers, remove spent flowers on early blooming perennials such as salvia, catmint and geraniums
- Water and fertilize container plants
- Deadhead annuals for continual bloom
- Divide irises
- Monitor for pests
- Prune overgrown shrubs by removing one-third of the oldest canes

- Prune out suckers growing from the ground and water sprouts, vertical growth from branches
- Continue to water newly installed plant material, especially during hot, windy weather
- **LAWN**
 - Do not fertilize lawns during hot weather
- **EDIBLES**
 - Continue to fertilize veggie gardens
 - Plant fall crops like greens and radishes
 - Herbicide Carryover: Pay attention to what you're using to amend your edible garden soil with. Some compost, manure, hay and other mulches can be contaminated with persistent herbicides, which can affect the growth of your veggies. Symptoms may include poor emergence, leaf distortion, stem cracking and overall poor health. Keep in mind you may also be dealing with insects, disease or too much or too little water. If you're dealing with contaminated soil you will most likely notice early symptoms in your tomatoes, beans, peas, and peppers.
- **PEST MANAGEMENT**
 - Spider Mites: These small bugs prefer a dry and warm environment. You may notice leaf flecking, yellow leaves and plants may start prematurely dropping foliage. Because these mites are so small they are hard to detect on the plant, hold a white piece of paper below the plant and tap to see if any mites fall off. Ventilate and water well to keep plants from getting too stressed.
 - Black Vine Weevil: The larvae cause minimal damage to root systems but you may notice chewed notches on the outsides of leaves from the mature adults. They prefer to feed at night so you might not notice activity during the day. These weevils usually target yew, broad-leaved evergreens as well as other deciduous and herbaceous plants.
 - Flea Beetle: These small flying insects are found in your vegetable garden usually eating tomato or potato foliage. Plants can usually survive some damage but it may stress or even kill plants if there are too many adults feeding.
 - Oak Leaf Blister: This disease is caused by the fungus *Taphrina caerulescens*. You may notice blisters, bumps or depressions in the leaves that may eventually brown and die. There is usually no real damage caused and it is recommended to keep the tree healthy through sufficient watering, fertilizing and pruning.

AUGUST

- **GENERAL**
 - Do not fertilize plants so they can prepare for winter properly
 - Divide daylilies

- **LAWN**

- Overseed lawn areas

- **PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Powdery Mildews: Thrives in warm dry climates and can be seen as white powdery substance usually found on the foliage of young plants. Improved air circulation, fungicidal sprays and planting resistant varieties can all help avoid powdery mildew.
- Ash Flower Gall Mite: Stressed ash trees are more likely to be affected but the galls don't usually affect the overall health of the tree. The cosmetic galls are a greenish yellow color that turn brown later in the summer.
- Tent Caterpillar: The adult caterpillars feed on the foliage of many fruit trees and hardwoods, which can lead to complete defoliation if left unchecked. Although there are natural enemies the quickest way to get rid of them is to prune out the white web like tent structure where the caterpillars gather. Spray application can also be effective when the caterpillars are young.
- Summer Leaf Scorch: When the weather is hot, dry and windy plant roots can't always keep up with the rate of transpiration or water loss from the leaves. The leaves may start to show signs of necrosis and wilting starting from the tips. Make sure to give your plants a deep water to help them stay hydrated and healthy.
- Hobo Spider: Although large and quick these spiders aren't as aggressive as often assumed. They rarely bite, usually only when trapped in clothing, shoes or when they are feeling threatened. They may start to move inside when the weather starts to cool down.

SEPTEMBER

- **GENERAL**

- Divide spring blooming perennials
- Divide daylilies and peonies
- Fall Watering: Deciduous trees need water even after their leaves fall. Continue watering once a week until the ground freezes so that the trees have plenty of moisture to come out of dormancy in the spring.
- Seasonal Needle Drop: Evergreens will drop their dead needles in the fall. This is a natural process and there is no management necessary as long as the tree is shedding its older growth, usually needles found closer to the trunk of the tree.

- **LAWN**

- Fertilize your lawn around Labor Day with our favorite, PRO-RICH.
- Consider aeration
- Decrease lawn water

- **EDIBLES**

- Harvest fruits and vegetables before frost (except brussel sprouts)

- **PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Spruce Spider Mites: These mites prefer cool weather often coming out in spring or fall. They usually go after older growth and you may notice grayish needles, flecking and needle loss near the bottom of the tree. Make sure to continue watering your trees to prevent drought and stress. Most insecticides are not effective on mites but they have a plethora of natural predators.
- Dothistroma Needle Blight: This fungal disease affects pine trees, and symptoms include red bands on needles that may affect growth or result in needle drop. Promote good air circulation and make sure to clean up needles and branches that may have fallen off. A fungicidal application can be effective in the spring to help protect new growth.

OCTOBER

- **GENERAL**

- Plant spring blooming bulbs
- Continue to plant deciduous trees, shrubs, and perennials until the end of the month if the weather allows
- Evergreens should be planted by the middle of the month and must be well watered until the ground freezes
- Transplant deciduous shrubs and trees after the leaves have dropped
- Continue to water newly installed plants
- Decrease watering on established plants so they can harden off for winter
- After a hard frost clean out annual containers; if you are planning to reuse potting soil the following year mix half old with half new
- Cut down any perennials or grasses not used for winter interest. More info [here](#).

- **LAWN**

- Fertilize your lawn around Columbus Day with our favorite, PRO-RICH.

- Dormant seed grasses and wildflowers
- ***PEST MANAGEMENT***
 - Rhizosphaera Needle Cast Disease: This is another fungal disease that can cause needle drop and sparse foliage in spruce trees. Needles lower down and close to the trunk may turn purple then brown before falling off. Make sure to clean up any infected needles that fall off and promote good general tree health. Fungicide spray application in the spring can help protect new growth.
 - Oak Rough Bulletgall Wasp: These wasps create large dark green colored galls on the new twigs that can cause the branches to die if left. Prune out infected branches in late summer/early fall.

WINTER

- Water evergreens and newly planted trees and shrubs well before the ground freezes
- Protect smooth barked trees from sunscald by wrapping them with tree wrap
- Protect plants from rodents and deer by fencing young trees and wrapping trunks with hardware cloth
- Spray repellents can be used to protect plants from deer, rabbits and voles
- Use Wilt Stop to help prevent moisture loss in evergreens
- Protect sensitive roses with extra mulch
- ***PEST MANAGEMENT***
 - Millipedes: Common in our gardens and yards but may try to migrate inside once the weather turns cold. They are usually found near the foundation and are harmless to humans.
 - Home-Invading Weevils: These slow moving weevils are small brown or black beetles about ¼ inch long. They can not fly and usually die out during the winter, they are harmless to humans.
 - Cluster Flies: Similar to house flies but larger they may try to find their way inside to overwinter. Usually found on sunny windows or up high.
 - Home Invaders: Other bugs that may try to move inside once the weather cools down are boxelder, western conifer seed bug, elm seed bug, tuxedo bug, and several types of root weevils in addition to the insects listed above. Most of these bugs will die out over the winter and do not reproduce during the winter. Although they can be a nuisance they are harmless to humans. Make sure your doors and windows are sealed and there aren't cracks or crevices for them to crawl through to get inside.

HELPFUL GUIDES FROM THE MSU EXTENSION SERVICE

- **GENERAL**

- [Composting](#)
- (Gardenwerks) [Care of New Plantings](#)

- **LAWN**

- [Successful Lawns](#)

- **EDIBLES**

- [Planting a Successful Home Vegetable Garden](#)
- [Vegetable Seed & Transplant Schedule](#)
- [Heirloom Vegetables](#)
- [Herbs](#)
- [Pruning Fruit Trees](#)
- [Asparagus](#)
- [Currants & Gooseberries](#)
- [Garlic](#)
- [Chokecherries & Shrub Plums](#)
- [Grapes \(North Dakota Extension\)](#)
- [Raspberries](#)
- [Rhubarb](#)
- [Serviceberries](#)
- [Tomatoes](#)
- [Strawberries](#)