

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PG. 1

The Garden Hotline is here to help you garden this spring.

Get out and grow!

PG. 2

Safe and Healthy Gardening

PG. 3

Family Style Gardening



“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow”

Audrey Hepburn



GARDEN PLANS – GET GROWING!

It's officially spring and time to get our gardens growing. Join us virtually to get advice on garden plans and trouble areas in your garden or for questions on how to choose plants and build soil this spring. We will be sharing this weekly garden newsletter through the season with our fellow northwest gardeners to help you get out and grow, naturally. You can also call or email us for personalized advice.

We are available Monday through Saturday from 9 – 5.

www.gardenhotline.org/question (206) 633-0224

Gardening and COVID-19 Concerns



SAFE AND HEALTHY GARDENING THIS SPRING

The best thing about gardening right now is that it can be a joyful experience that allows us time to do something normal, and natural, without worrying about contact with strangers or surfaces they have touched. We are all hyper aware of this right now and digging in the soil and being outside of your house allows you to relax and be in the moment without concerns. Especially with the warm spring sunshine on your face! Gardening solo or with your family is a great stress reliever and will reward you with the fruits of your labor later on this spring and summer. Get out and get growing with these handy tips.

Pull those early emerging weeds! [Shotweed](#) is up and blooming already! Pull it out before it goes to seed and shoots its bountiful seed bank into your soil. Did you know this "weed" was edible? Trim the roots and wash the plant and add it to your springtime salad for a dose of vitamins and minerals - boost your immune system for a double bonus!

Trim out the dead materials you might have left standing for wildlife last fall. The dead flower heads on your hydrangeas, old marigold or cosmos stalks you left in place for the birds to forage seed from, yellowing leaves on your overwintered kale or collards, can all use your attention right now. Be careful of removing hollow reeds and of other spaces where [solitary native bees](#) might be nesting.

Get your soil prepared in your vegetable garden. If your soil is not too wet it is time to start adding some compost. To check if the soil should be handled right now take a clump of soil from your garden bed and roll it into a ball in your hand. Toss it into the air from your hand, back into your hand a few times, and see if it breaks apart. If it clings together and doesn't fall apart at all it is not ready to dig in. You can refer to our [soil resource page](#) for information on where to find compost.

Turn in your cover crops. If your soil is ready to be worked and you want to plant some early crops like peas and radishes it is time to turn the cover crop under the soil. You don't need to belabor it, just turn it under with a garden fork and give it a week or two to die back. If you are anxious to get planting pull your cover crop from the area you want to plant and use it as mulch in other areas of the garden or turn it in later with the rest of the garden bed. Watch our latest [YOUTUBE](#) video about cover crops in the garden.

Plant early crops! Pea season is upon us. Even if all you have is a patio or deck you can grow some peas. You just need a pot (with holes for drainage) deep enough to accommodate about 12 inches of roots, some good potting soil (from a bag), a way to support the vines or a place the vines can trail from and your choice of [pea seeds](#) to grow.

Microgreens can grow indoors - if you don't have any outdoor space try growing a crop of fast growing, nutrient packed microgreens. Fill a shallow container with potting soil, but not so high that it will spill over when watered. Spread one variety of seed densely over the soil and cover with a layer of soil. Put in a sunny window and let grow. Trim the sprouts after two sets of leaves are completely unfolded. Try kale or mustard seed for a spicy bite or sunflower seeds for a nutty tasting crunch. Stay tuned for an instructional video on microgreens from the Garden Hotline. Call us now for more information!

Happy Spring! Gardening is a fun experience that allows us to stay safe and healthy and work together as a family during this unusual time. Children gain many benefits from gardening activities – they learn about natural systems like weather and how that affects how our gardens grow. Children use and fine tune both fine motor skills and big muscle skills while also learning how to use tools, gaining practical skills. They learn to care for something and develop patience while waiting for a seed to germinate or a tomato to develop. Communication and leadership skills unfold as they develop a garden plan and lead activities.



FAMILY STYLE GARDENING

Here are a few fun activities you can do with your family right now while you are all home together.

Make an edible garden map! Draw out the garden you will grow together – use butcher block paper and colored pencils to mark out where the tomatoes will grow and where you will plant the peas! Cut out pictures from old seed catalogs to use for images. It doesn't need to be perfect but can be a fun project to get you and your children planning!

Create a “beetle bank” by mounding soil and planting native grasses around your garden beds. [Black beetles](#) are voracious slug eaters and you will be happy to have asked them to live in your garden.

Plant native plants to attract native wildlife. Spring is a great time to get plants into the garden that will attract wildlife. [Native plants](#) are well recognized by our native fauna and help attract these beauties to your garden. Birds, bats and insects can be a big help managing insect pests in the garden while also making for a little excitement when you spy them amongst your plants!

Plant Seeds together – exploring the [diversity of seeds](#) is a fascinating adventure for young and old alike. Re-use emptied yogurt containers and punch some holes in the bottom and fill them with potting soil. Soak the pots well to moisten the soil. Plant some pea seeds, large enough for the youngest child to manipulate; just press them into the soil about an inch. Sprinkle paper thin marigold seeds or dust teensy lettuce seeds onto the soil and cover them lightly. Put them in a sunny window and use a mister to water until they emerge.

Build a Bean Teepee. Get your bean teepee up and ready for bean planting season. You will need at least 6 large bamboo poles and some heavy twine to lash them all together on one end. Get the whole family out there to pull the legs apart and plant them into the soil to steady the tent. This last week in the Children's Garden at the Good Shepherd Center volunteers helped to plant radishes around the edges of the teepee for an early harvest while we wait for the right time to [plant beans](#).

Call or email the Garden Hotline for support on your projects and for more ideas.

*Spring has returned. The earth is
like a child that knows poems.*

-Rainier Maria Rilke

