

April's Gardening List Grows Bigger

One of my favorite gardening authors, Margaret Roach, sends out an informative as well as entertaining newsletter, "A Way to Garden". She always reminds gardeners that we need to enjoy what we do as well as have fun while we are doing it!

In her latest newsletter she provides 10 strategies to utilize in the crazy month of April that includes:

1. **Start cleanup near the house.** Tidying beds along the most-traveled front walkway early reminds me that I can do this, a little at a time. Work out from homebase.
2. **"Spot clean" key areas** – again, working on first things first. Why prep the tomato row when you haven't even planted the peas or spinach? Spot clean targeted areas so that earliest crops can get sown.
3. **Gently remove matted leaves to uncover early spring ornamentals first**, such as emerging spring bulbs and ephemerals, even if you can't stop to clean the whole bed.
4. **Stay on track with seed-starting.** Make a chart of what to sow when, indoors or out, or organize packets week-by-week, in an accordion file or recipe-card box. Move any packet that's best sown a little at a time ahead two weeks in the filing system after you use it, to plan for a staggered supply of salads, carrots, radishes and such.
5. **Make space in the compost heap for incoming debris** you'll be generating fast. Extract and preferably screen finished material from the bottom to topdress beds as you clean them.
6. **Order mulch now, preferably a bulk delivery** – skipping all those plastic bags.
7. **Empty nest boxes of old nests**, and maybe add more birdhouses.
8. **Muck out water gardens**, removing floating de-icers. Get pumps and filters going again.
9. While doing all that: **Never walk, or work, in mucky soil.** Roach stays off soft, and semi-frozen lawns, too, delaying some chores. She says that you can do the tasks in another week, but she can't easily fix soil turned to "concrete".
10. **Treat yourself to a little color**-again, for encouragement. Roach likes big bowls of pansies or violas to cheer her on in April, because the list can feel daunting, especially in years when winter sticks around a little too long!

Since April is **Ohio Native Plant Month**, I thought I would share some of my favorite native plants that are starting to emerge. **Twinleaf**, *Jeffersonia diphylla*, is a perennial spring ephemeral which blooms only for a few days. Each leaf is deeply divided into two wing-like segments giving the appearance of a large butterfly. This plant is named in honor of Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, and is an uncommon wildflower whose bright, white flowers appear around April 13, Jefferson's birthday. Twinleaf's range is throughout the southern half of Ohio according to Robert L. Henn in his reference book, **Wildflowers of Ohio**.

My daily walk to the mailbox has me eyeing all the weeds coming up in my flower beds. I ran across an interesting quote the other day, "A weed is simply a plant that wants to grow where people want something else." After our mild winter it seems that I have lots of plants growing where I want something else! How about you?