

Gardening

Mount Alexander **LIVING**



How does your garden grow?

Spring is just around the corner so get prepared now so you can enjoy your garden later.

While spending time in your garden may be a favourite pastime, a little preventative maintenance can make a big difference.

It can save time and prevent problems before they arise so that you can enjoy working in your garden when the warmer weather finally arrives.

Your tools can make fast work of bigger jobs. Take the time to remove any debris and hose off any leftover landscaping material. If your favourite garden spade, rake or shovel has a timber handle, apply a protectant product such as linseed oil. Service your secateurs, loppers and pruning saws and check the air in your wheelbarrow's wheel.

If your tools are of the larger variety, such as a bobcat or tractor, book them in for a service if they need one.

Give your outdoor hinges a check over and lubricate your gate latch so that your neighbours are not notified each time you go out. Remove any cobwebs from light fixtures and eaves to discourage unwanted spiders and insects from entering your space.

Clean out the joins and cracks in your paths and pavers as these spaces tend to collect seeds, mulch, and dried garden matter. Cleaning these will help prevent



Check out your garden tools now to make sure they are all in working order and ready for action.

germination so you don't have to weed them in the future, a stiff outdoor broom works well.

Pots indoors and in the garden change over time. They can fade from the sun,

crack and become home to local insects. Top them up with extra soil if needed and check the drainage holes for insects like earwigs and to ensure no roots are sticking out.

Q&A

Q: I know now is a great time to fertilise but the shops have so many types. Is there a good multipurpose pellet fertiliser?

- Gay, Castlemaine

A: Some plants will thrive better on a specialised fertiliser (e.g. citrus, camellias, roses etc.), whereas an all-purpose fertiliser such as Blood & Bone or Grow Better Organic Fertiliser pellets are fantastic for giving your garden a general feed. You do want to be careful with some plants, such as natives and plants in the proteaceae family (eg: proteas and leucadendrons), which are sensitive to phosphorus and will burn if given too strong a fertiliser. Always use a specialised fertiliser for these plants.

Q: I have bought a bare rooted tree. How quickly do I need to get this into the ground?

- Max, Castlemaine

A: Generally, you want to have it planted in the ground by the middle of August so it can ride the spring wave and warm weather that is on its way. When you take it home from your local nursery, cover the roots with potting mix or damp soil right away to stop the roots from drying out, it can sit like this for a number of weeks.

Q: My lawn is getting messy. Is it okay to mow in winter when it's wet?

- Amalia, Castlemaine

A: Absolutely! Your lawn depending on its variety will winter better (not go so brown) if left a little higher in length. Try and pick a dry patch in the weather, and then the clippings shouldn't turn into sludge as much.

- Elisabeth Templeton,
ASQ Garden & Landscape.

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