



# Lawn & Garden

TIPS FOR SPRING

The Mendota Reporter  
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## 2022 top garden trends and expert tips for success

(BPT) - Interest in gardening continues to blossom as more people decide to exercise their green thumb and make the most of their outdoor spaces. Whether it's a quaint balcony, large backyard garden or front yard landscaping, gardening opportunities are bountiful.

With a little creativity and some expert insight, anyone can be a successful gardener. Here are some simple tips and the top trends for 2022 to inspire every type of gardener.

### Low maintenance, high impact

Do you want a magazine-worthy landscape but don't want to spend every day tending to plants? The trick is to strategically select eye-catching flowers that are easy to care for.

There are many plants that offer beautiful blooms with surprisingly little work. Beacon Impatiens are the ideal plant for

flowerbeds with partial sun, rewarding you with ample, long-lasting color for the shade. Add Megawatt Begonias in pots and transition spaces - this bigger-than-life hybrid provides rich color and glossy foliage with little care. For sunny spots, you can't go wrong with low-maintenance E3 Easy Wave Petunias. This spreading petunia comes in a variety of hues, adding sweeping color that will be the envy of the neighborhood.

### Fun and flavorful foods

As the sustainability movement continues, more people are interested in growing their own food. Whether it's a small herb garden or a large vegetable plot, having homegrown food at your fingertips can help you eat healthier and fresher.

Many vegetables and herbs do as well in containers as they do in the ground, so if you're short on space,



After spending the last few years close to home, people are taking exceptional pride in their property by prioritizing curb appeal.

you can still succeed with growing vegetables as long as you can give your plants a sunny spot and adequate water. An insider tip is to skip seeds and buy garden-ready plants that are already established, such as Burpee vegetables and herbs. This helps support successful growing and faster harvests.

Tomatoes are a must for any vegetable grower. But what if you don't

have an outdoor growing space? No garden, no problem with the Kitchen Minis collection of indoor potted vegetables. Look for Siam Tomato, which gives you several weeks of cherry-sized fruit for your fresh eating and recipes. Enjoy it on a sunny windowsill indoors or next to your other easy-access countertop herbs.

### Pollinator gardens

Pollination is essential for plants to flourish, and according to the U.S. Forest Service, pollinators are responsible for assisting over 80% of the world's flowering plants to reproduce. This includes hard-working insects like butterflies, bees and birds. Because of their essential work, everyone can enjoy plants that delight the eyes and tasty foods that tantalize the taste buds.

Some pollinator populations are diminishing, so people are taking action by planting pollinator-friendly gardens. For example, if you want butterfly bliss in your garden, choose Chrysalis Buddleia. Known as Butterfly Bush, this plant has an abundance of flowers but grows in a manageable size - perfect for a small hanging basket. Add in a few Shamrock Lantana, whose blooms are an attractive, soft landing pad, and you'll be creating a pollinator paradise.

### First impressions

After spending the last few years close to home, people are taking exceptional pride in their property by prioritizing curb appeal. Friendly yellows and vivid purples are on trend and broadly appealing, making your home stand out on the block.

For a sunny show all season long, plant Bee's Knees Petunias. The intense yellow color of each big bloom adds brightness to your landscaping. Juxtapose the yellow with Jolt Purple Dianthus, adding a vivid magenta shade that instantly adds personality.

Curb appeal can come from more than just flowering plants, of course. For visual interest in a fruiting plant, check out Pepper Candy Cane Chocolate Cherry. With variegated foliage and uniquely striped fruit that changes from green to chocolate and cherry red, this is a treat for the eyes and the stomach.

No matter the size of your garden space or the time you can put into your plants, there's something for everyone in the top gardening trends of the year.

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# Telling signs 3 common insects are infesting a lawn

Well-maintained lawns are a byproduct of hard work. That hard work is a point of pride for homeowners who spend countless hours throughout spring, summer and fall tending to their lawns.

All that hard work can be compromised when uninvited guests, namely insects, show up in a lawn. Insect infestations can turn a normally pristine and lush green lawn into a brown and sickly eyesore. Identifying which type of insect is damaging a lawn is the first step toward returning that lawn to its green glory. These are three common lawn insects and signs that they're infesting a lawn.

### 1. Grubs

Grubs like to feast on the roots of grass right below

the surface. Michigan State University Extension Turf & Landscape reports that grub damage can appear from March to early May or from mid-September to early November. Wilted grass blades are often the first indicator of a grub infestation, which is followed by patches of brown turf and eventually death. Crows, skunks and moles eat grubs, so the sight of them in a lawn could indicate an infestation.

### 2. Chinch bugs

Chinch bugs are not necessarily problematic when their populations are limited to around 10 to 15 bugs per square foot of lawn. In such instances, chinch bug populations are generally controlled by ants and ladybugs. However, extreme heat and drought, problems

that have plagued various regions in North America in recent years, reduce the populations of bugs that feed on chinch bugs, thus increasing the population of these unwanted guests that feed on grass. Damage from chinch bugs is most visible between June and September. That damage begins with grass taking on a purple tinge before it turns yellow and then brown after wilting.

### 3. Cutworms

Cutworms are moth larvae that hide in the thatch layer of a lawn during the day before emerging at night to feed on grass blades. Patches of brown grass between one and two inches in width is a sign of cutworm infestation. Homeowners who notice a growing num-



ber of birds pecking away in their lawns may have a cutworm infestation, which can be confirmed by peeling up a section of damaged grass and looking for cutworms,

which are brown, gray or black and tend to be around two inches long.

The good news is that grub, chinch bug and cutworm populations can be

controlled. Local turf specialists can recommend strategies to curtail such populations and help homeowners restore their lawns to full health.



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# Russian orphan finds a home and success on Illinois farm

By TAMMIE SLOUP

FarmWeek

Anya Irons has been digging in the dirt since she was a girl.

First, in a small garden plot at the Russian orphanage where she lived until she was 15.

During a 10-day sponsored stay with the Ioerger family at their Minonk farm in 2003, the 15-year-old's eyes lit up upon seeing their spanning farmland and small garden, where she spent part of her trip working in the soil and lending a hand wherever she could.

"I had a dictionary with me but I couldn't tell them how much I appreciated them," said Irons, who spoke only Russian at the time. "I just drew pictures for them those 10 days."

Lowell and Janet Ioerger (pronounced yay-ger) adopted Irons two months after that trip, and today, the 34-year-old has grown a 1-acre garden to 15 acres of flower and produce gardens and nine greenhouses at the centennial farm.

"I was the happiest kid in the world," she remembers, adding in Russia, children cannot be adopted after they turn 16.

The Ioergers have two sons — Zach and Jacob — around Irons' age, and the couple also wanted a daughter.

"It took me a while to call them mom and dad — I never had parents," Irons said. "It took a while to get used to it, and there were a few kids who came back to the orphanage (after being adopted), and they were heartbroken. But my parents said, 'You're not going anywhere.'"

"Now I feel like I've always been here."

As the years go on, Irons' memories of the orphan-

age fade and are replaced with technicolor memories of building a successful flower and produce operation. Today, Irons, her parents, and her two young daughters partner with 40 regional florists and sell their fruit, vegetables and flower arrangements at farmers markets and the farm's retail store — Triple I Garden Shop.

As the busy selling season starts soon, the greenhouses, many of which were converted from hog buildings, are filled with 4,000 potted plants and flowers of all sizes and different arrangements.

Walking through one greenhouse, Irons, with her daughters, Lyla, 9, and Ali, 6, in tow, points out how each pot has a different "recipe" and blend of colors. She holds up one pot, noting she named the arrangement "Candyland," and touches a hanging planter, explaining that one is called "Grandma's Choice" because the flowers bear her mother's favorite colors.

Aside from the potted plants, veggies and herbs are starting to grow in the 20,000 square feet of greenhouses, almost ready to be planted in the nearby garden plots.

Although the arrangements are a family project, Lowell Ioerger said Irons is the real artist as she has a special knack and creativeness, earning customers from as far away as Nebraska.

Their work gears up in early March, with the family arranging hundreds of planters a day. By the first week in May, the family will start selling and traveling to regional farmers markets — one of Lyla and Ali's favorite activities.

"The girls love going to



**Anya Irons, of Minonk, walks through one of her nine greenhouses at Ioerger Family Farms. Raised in a Russian orphanage until she was 15, Irons was adopted by the Ioerger family in 2003 and since then she has grown the family's flower and produce operation to 15 acres. (Photo by Tammie Sloup of FarmWeek)**

the garden to pull carrots or pick other vegetables to get ready for the farmers markets," Irons said. "They beg me to go to the markets."

Irons met her husband, Richie, while attending Illinois Central College, and the two live down the road from her parents. She begins to choke up as she talks about her relationship with her daughters and how different her childhood was in an orphanage with 150 other children. She dubbed her girls farmers at heart.

"With my 9-year-old, I'll ask her what she wants to be and she'll say, 'Mommy, I want to be like you, a farmer.'"

"She sees the joy in me."

Since about 2005, the farm has converted more of its corn and soybean fields to the gardens, and the Ioergers now raise fewer hogs and cattle.

Aside from fresh cut flowers, potted arrangements, herbs and produce, the Ioergers sell beef, eggs, jams, jellies and more.

Lowell Ioerger said there's a feeling of fulfillment in growing flowers and produce compared to corn and soybeans.

"You're selling directly to the public and eating your own food," he said.

Ioerger explained he was reading a newspaper article

about sponsoring Russian orphans in 2003, which prompted him and Janet to attend a meeting, where they chose Irons from 100 photos presented.

"When she came here, she just fit into our family so well," Ioerger said, adding two years later, the family adopted another 14-year-old girl, Kristina, from the same orphanage. Irons was roommates with Kristina at the orphanage, and now they're sisters. Kristina is a hairstylist in the Bloomington area and helps out on the farm regularly.

"We were always taking in stray kids," Ioerger said,

explaining many of their sons' friends would stay at the house as well as nieces and nephews.

Irons' parents enjoy watching their daughter build on her successes and pass her skills down to her daughters.

"It's very therapeutic looking at the flowers, knowing we did this, we created this," Irons said. "It's amazing."

*(This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.)*





Certain plants can help repel insects and provide the additional benefits like fresh food and aesthetic appeal that so many people love.

# Popular insect repellent plants

Homeowners choose plants for their properties based on a number of variables. Some may be into growing their own foods, while others desire their gardens to be an awe-inspiring mélange of bright colors and alluring scents. There's no wrong reason to plant a fresh garden, but some plants offer extra benefits, such as repelling insects.

Insects can be a nuisance and a threat to individuals' overall health. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, insect-borne diseases are viral and bacterial illnesses that develop from insect bites. Mosquitoes, sand flies and fleas are some examples of insects that can pass on disease. Fever, chills, headache, and muscle soreness are just a few of the more common symptoms linked to insect-borne diseases.

The good news for avid gardeners is that certain plants can help repel insects

and provide the additional benefits like fresh food and aesthetic appeal that so many people love.

- Basil: The aroma of fresh basil is enough to compel any gardener to make a place for it in their garden. But there's more to fresh basil than its scent, as the Farmers Almanac notes it can be used to repel mosquitoes and moths.

- Lavender: Fleas, flies, mosquitoes, and moths are not fans of this aromatic and colorful member of the mint family. Bees tend to be drawn to lavender, a durable plant that many garden centers recommend in areas prone to drought or hot summers without much precipitation.

- Mint: Mint is another plant that is instantly recognizable for its aroma. But mint lovers may not realize that it's also great for keeping ants at bay. Mint also can be used to repel mosquitoes, but gardeners

with no experience planting mint should plant it in pots. That's because the Farmers Almanac notes mint is an especially aggressive spreader that can quickly take over a garden. Separating mint in pots can prevent it from bullying its way into other plants' domains.

- Lemongrass: Lemongrass is a tropical grass that's so fragrant it's often used in perfumes. Lemongrass contains citronella, which many people associate with repelling mosquitoes. A potted lemongrass plant can repel these unwanted guests, keeping them away from decks, porches and/or patios all summer long.

- Chrysanthemums: The Farmers' Almanac® recommends using chrysanthemums, which repel a range of insects from bedbugs to fleas to ants, as border plants around a home. That's because they contain the natural insecti-

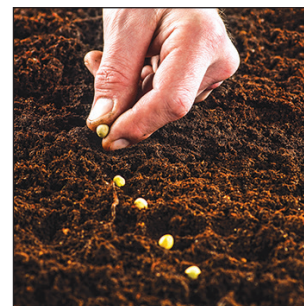
cide pyrethrin, which can serve as something of an insect-repelling boundary around a home.

Insects are unwanted guests around a home each spring, summer and fall. Certain plants can help repel insects and serve as an eco-friendly alternative to insecticides.

# Spring gardening tips

Some days it feels like spring will never get here. Don't worry – the weather will warm up (and it has) and your garden will need some TLC. You can get your garden ready with these five easy spring gardening tips.

1. Clean up and repair any winter damage. Once the ground is clear, you can assess any damage from the winter weather. Clean up broken branches or boughs. Gather up dead leaves and any other debris. This is also the perfect time to sharpen your garden tools before you start working on the soil and plants.
2. Water and fertilize the soil. After winter is over, your soil will most likely be dried out. It's time to get out the watering can or garden hose and add some moisture. You can also add manure, compost or fertilizers to give the soil some much-needed nutrients.
3. Prune old plants. This is where the sharpened garden tools come in handy. Prune any diseased or dead branches on plants and shrubs. You can also prune any branches that mess with the shape you desire for your trees and shrubs. Keep in mind that some shrubs and trees have different pruning seasons, so you don't want to prune them too early.
4. Add mulch to thinned-out areas. Once the soil and plants are taken care of, you'll need to add mulch to any areas that have thinned out over the winter. Mulch helps the garden retain moisture and maintain temperature. It also helps prevent disease in your plants.
5. Plant new seeds. Depending on your climate, you can start planting seeds. If you're working in a vegetable garden, you can start with early, slow-growing plants like peas, lettuce and arugula. Some spring plants for a flower garden include lilacs, tulips, pansies and snapdragons.



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## How to prepare landscapes for new plants

New plants can add much to a landscape. Whether they're replacing plants that are no longer thriving or being added to supplement an existing landscape, new plants are an affordable way to give a home's exterior a whole new look.

Much consideration is given to which plants to add to a landscape. That's understandable, as homeowners want to choose plants that will thrive and won't compromise the health of surrounding plants and trees. Before planting or even choosing plants, it's important to plan for new additions to a landscape. Preparing the landscape can inform homeowners about which plants to purchase and can ensure they thrive after planting.

- Document sunlight exposure. Plants have different needs, and one of the biggest differences between species is the amount of sunlight they need to thrive. According to Penn State Extension, plants characterized as "full sun" require six or more hours of sunlight per day, while those considered "partial sun" need between four and six hours of sunlight per day. Plants designated as "partial shade" need two to four hours of sun per day, while "shade" plants need less than two hours of sunlight a day. Documenting sunlight exposure in advance gives homeowners an idea of which plants should be planted and where they should be planted. Jot down these observations in a journal over several weeks and then choose plants that will thrive in each area.

- Test the soil. A soil pH test is a simple

and quick way to determine the acidity of soil. Soil pH levels will indicate how likely a plant is to thrive in a given spot. High levels won't necessarily mean an area should be avoided, as some plants thrive in acidic soils. Additional soil tests can determine other characteristics, such as the nutrient levels of soil and the amount of organic matter it contains. Each of these variables can help homeowners make the right choices as they introduce new plants to their properties.

- Consider local wildlife. If local wildlife makes its presence known on a property, homeowners may want to take proactive steps prior to planting anything new. A new fence might prevent animals like deer from getting in, but that likely won't do much to repel smaller animals like squirrels, rabbits or foxes. If wildlife is a concern, homeowners can seek



advice at their local garden center about which plants certain animals are likely to ignore. Homeowners who want to attract wildlife can do the same in reverse, choosing plants wildlife will be drawn to. Homeowners who want to deter wildlife should erect fencing or other barriers prior to planting.

- Clear space if necessary. Plants grow up and out, and cramped quarters can make it hard for new plants to thrive. Some may thrive but only at the expense of other plants. If necessary, clear space prior to planting to ensure plants have ample space to grow.

Some pre-planting landscape preparation can ensure new plants thrive.



Novice gardeners have scores of resources at their disposal, including the advice of gardeners who have made mistakes and learned from them.

## 6 ways to make your garden more successful

Homeowners enjoy gardening for many different reasons. In addition to adding beauty to a property, gardens can offset grocery costs by yielding tasty produce. They also offer important habitats and food sources for both insects and animals.

While growing a vegetable or flower garden can turn into a rewarding hobby, or even a passion, gardening also can be overwhelming — particularly when the results are less than stellar. Novice gardeners have scores of resources at their disposal, including the advice of gardeners who have made mistakes and learned from them. The following guidance can make home gardens that much more successful.

### 1. Start small

You may have visions of an expansive garden growing rows of crops or acres of flowers. But it is smart to start small and build on what you find successful, which includes plants that thrive in your lawn and garden.

This also is beneficial if you are unsure of vegetable yields. Several blooming plants producing bushels of crops can be overwhelm-

ing, especially if you can't get to harvesting or cooking them in a timely fashion.

### 2. Assess the soil

Plants need nutrient-rich soil to encourage extensive root systems and produce strong, hardy plants, according to the gardening resource GrowVeg. Nourish soil with organic matter, such as manure, compost, shredded leaves, and natural mulch. Add this organic matter in the off-season to give it enough time to be incorporated into the ground before spring. You can have your soil tested for pH and other characteristics that make it friendly or averse to plants at a local garden center.

### 3. Arm yourself with knowledge

Do you know how deeply to plant seeds and how far apart to space plants? Are you aware of the sunlight needs of certain flowers or plants? If not, read the packaging and do your research so your plants have the best chance of not only sprouting, but also surviving. Many people prefer to start seedlings indoors in late winter and then transfer those plants outdoors when they are stronger and more established.

### 4. Sit in your yard and observe

Watch the way the sunlight dances over areas of your landscape. Take note of which areas get the most sun and shade. This will help you plan what to plant and where to plant it. Vegetable gardens tend to need ample sunlight to bear pick-worthy produce. You can give plants a leg up by growing them in optimal conditions.

### 5. Choose hardy varieties.

Certain plants have been bred to thrive in your climate, including heat-tolerant plants for climates with sweltering summer sun. Consult with a local gardening center to figure out which plant zone you are in and which plants will do best within that zone.

### 6. Use rainwater

Rainwater contains fewer contaminants and additives than tap water, which can benefit garden plants. Collect rainwater in rain barrels and use irrigation systems to deliver it to the garden.

Home gardens can yield many gifts, from flowers to fruit. Beginners can utilize some time-tested strategies to increase their chances of planting a successful garden.

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# Tech devices to make gardening more fun

Many people take to the great outdoors to escape the increasingly tech-driven daily grind. Though that's an understandable perspective, gardeners who aren't deploying tech in their home gardens could be missing out on a host of benefits that could help their plants, flowers and vegetables thrive.

Devices like smartphones and tablets have made many aspects of life easier and more efficient, and various tech products can do the same when working in the garden.

- **Plant monitor:** Plant monitors are sensors that can keep tabs on the health of plants and deliver that information to gardeners. Plant monitors often connect to smartphones via Bluetooth and can deliver information

on the amount of heat, light and water a plant is getting. Sensors vary in price, and some will provide more information than others. But these sensors are ideal for gardeners who love their plants but often forget to check up on them each day.

- **Garden camera:** Critters and insects are the bane of many gardeners' existence. Determining just what is nibbling away at flowers and plants isn't always so easy, as many animals are savvy enough to restrict their dining to the middle of the night and insects are so small they can be hard to spot. Garden cameras can serve as the watchmen of a garden and gardeners can review footage to determine just who is compromising all of their hard work. They

can then use that knowledge to remedy the situation and give their plants a better chance to thrive.

- **Weather station:** Even the most seasoned gardeners cannot document the conditions outside as effectively as a good weather sensor. Weather sensors track conditions such as temperature, relative humidity and air

quality. This information can then be paired with irrigation devices to ensure plants get all the care they need to thrive throughout the season.

- **Garden hub:** Avid gardeners have traditionally had to arrange for neighbors or loved ones to tend to their plants when they leave home for vacation

or weekend getaways. Garden hubs can take care of that by pairing with smart irrigation systems that ensure plants are watered even when no one is home. Certain hubs even gather and analyze local weather conditions to develop a watering schedule to ensure plants thrive. These hubs aren't just handy when on

vacation, as they can be great for gardeners who want to know things about their plants that are not apparent to the naked eye.

People may see their gardens as welcome respites from their devices. But garden gadgets can help plants thrive and make time in the garden that much more enjoyable.



Devices like smartphones and tablets have made many aspects of life easier and more efficient, and various tech products can do the same when working in the garden.



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