

Gardening Calendar for April

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If you have not planted your tomato transplants yet, it is time. For a tasty cherry tomato that is a heat setter and nematode resistant consider BHN 968. The Rodeo tomato for 2020 is the Red Snapper. It is a determinate heat setter but may be hard to find because of limited numbers. The 2019 Rodeo tomato HM 8849 is also available on the market. Other excellent choices are Celebrity, Red Deuce, Phoenix, 444, 602, Ruby Crush (cherry) Tycoon, and Valley Cat. The Celebrity, Tycoon, and Valley Cat are nematode resistant.

Prepare the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer per 100 sq. ft of bed. Use tomato cages to keep the developing fruit off the ground. My favorite mulch for the vegetable garden is live oak leaves. The material spread 2 inches deep around the plants works well.

In addition to tomatoes plant pepper and eggplant transplants. By seed plant green beans, cucumbers, okra, and summer squash. To fare better against the squash vine borers, replace summer squash with tatuma. It tastes the same and is not bothered by the borers.

Your chard, spinach and Brussels sprouts may still be producing palatable product, but the other greens are probably getting bitter. Harvest the English peas when they are young. Use the onions in between the largest plants as green onions so there is 6 inches space between the remaining plants. The tops will flop over when the bulbs are ready to harvest, probably at the end of May.

There is some debate whether mounding up the potatoes with soil as the stems grow works to increase the yield when the temps have been as warm as they have this spring. Another option is to just fill the planting trench with soil. The first "new potatoes" can be harvested as soon as some blooms appear.

In the flower garden the snapdragons and sweet peas are still blooming well. Once the snapdragon rust shows up, replace them with zinnias. Zinnias can be planted in April by seed or transplant. Zinnias are outstanding because of the cut flowers they produce and their value as nectar sources for butterflies and hummingbirds. They also provide a favorite food source for the seed eaters. California Giant is a good seeded zinnia. Also consider the Dreamland hybrid transplant.

If you have naturalized larkspur and blue curl, they will fill the butterfly nectar gap until, zinnias, milkweed, and mist flower are in full bloom. Plant tropical and native milkweeds for both their nectar production and to provide a place for Monarch butterflies to lay their eggs. The migrating Monarchs will be visiting in large numbers this month to produce a new generation of caterpillars to mature and replace the current generation, and to continue the migration north.

Fertilize the lawn with a slow release lawn fertilizer after mid-month. The product with a 19-5-9 nutrient mix works well.

Maintain the insecticide and fungicide spray program on your fruit trees. Stink bugs are especially difficult to control. Malathion or Sevin sprayed every week works best.