

Slug: Ask the Master Gardener
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April is a very busy month for gardeners. As soon as your soil is dry enough to work, you can add some organic matter such as compost, peat moss or well-aged manure. Till or spade it in well, then let the soil settle for about a week before you plant.

While you are waiting, you can divide up your perennials such as day lilies, phlox and Shasta daisies. Divide the clumps of plants with a spade or sharp knife, then replant what you want and give away the rest.

You can also feed your flowering shrubs as soon as the blooms fade. Give them a drink of a high nitrogen fertilizer to help them grow strong and healthy.

You can mow the lawn if the grass is dry enough and you can prune your flowering shrubs and trees after the bloom is gone. Be sure to get rid of suckers.

Start the annual slug hunt maybe you can get a jump on them if you start now. Also start weeding before seeds form on them.

April is berry planting time. Strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries can be planted this month. You can also plant potatoes, cabbage, parsnips, peas, carrots, lettuce, radishes, spinach and Swiss chard.

Dahlias, gladiolas, ranunculus and other summer blooming bulbs are available in local nurseries now for immediate planting.

Take a look around and deadhead your faded flowers. It makes the plant look better and directs the plant's energy into new growth. April is a hard-working garden month, but isn't it great to be able to just get outside in the garden after such a soggy winter?

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This column is written by Washington State University/Skagit County certified Master Gardeners. Questions may be submitted to WSU/Skagit County Extension, 306 S. First Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-3805.
