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We'll be Back

I've been seeing lots of articles in the news and on social media lately about gardening and its benefits – some of the headlines I've seen include:

"For Stay-at-Home Stress Relief, San Antonians Turn to Gardening"
"Gardening self-care: Vegetables you can plant right now (indoors and out) during the coronavirus"
"4 GARDENING ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO -- WHILE SELF-

ISOLATING. It's good for your mental health, public health, and the planet”

I couldn't agree more. My gardens are my safe place. I can honestly say that I don't think I would have made it through the death of husband eight years ago had I not been able to lose myself in my gardens that spring and summer – and even now. Gardening allows me to take my mind off of pretty much everything that's going on around me. It centers me, and helps to balance anything else being thrown at me by the world. This is especially important these days, with the constant updates on the latest numbers of cases of the virus, and the worries about whether my business will survive the shutdown – or whether the businesses of my many friends will survive. It can be overwhelming, but I am taking solace as I work, surrounded by the hundreds of vegetable and herb seedlings that I started and am tending to – even for just a little while, before I have to go back to trying to figure out ways to pay my vendors and other bills. I know I am not alone in these worries, but I am the eternal optimist, so I have to keep the seedlings going - I know you're all going to be anxious to get some for your gardens as soon as we reopen.

If all of the news has you feeling anxious, worried, and unsure, I cannot recommend gardening as a remedy enough. As a meme I've seen frequently says, "Gardening is cheaper than psychotherapy, and you get tomatoes!" It's also a great thing to do with the kids who are home while schools are closed. There are lots of lessons to teach through gardening, and the kids won't even notice that they're actually learning something while they're having all that fun!

One good thing that has come from the need for me to mostly stay at home (aside from all those seedlings) is that I have finally, with the help of Chelsea's own Surelutions, gotten online purchasing set up on our website (check it out [here](#))! It's still a work in progress, and we are slowly adding items to the site, so check back often.

Please Note: due to the restrictions imposed on “non-essential” businesses (isn't gardening essential?!), we are unable to ship

items or allow you to pick up orders for the moment. We **can** sell gift certificates (available on our [website](#)) and mail them to you now for future use, and if you want to purchase something now, and have it shipped or pick it up when the all-clear is given, we will happily hold it for you so you're sure to get what you want. If you don't see something on the website that you want or need, give us a call or [email us](#). We will be checking voicemails and emails regularly.

While I know that some businesses are finding ways around the rules, and I struggled for some time trying to justify my doing so, I came to the conclusion that, painful as it may be, staying closed and adhering strictly to the rules that were put in place is the right thing to do to try to ensure that we don't play any part in spreading the virus. I am acutely aware of the risks, in part, because I have a family member who is immunocompromised, and I would never forgive myself if I were to do something that risked her life. I also don't think I could ever forgive myself if I did something to risk the life of someone else's loved one. I know that, when the everything settles, and we can all get back to our normal lives, this decision will prove to have been the right thing for me to do.

I absolutely encourage you to continue to support local businesses, as much as is possible for you, during this time: shop at local stores that do remain open as essential services, such as grocery, pharmacy, pet food, and agriculture stores (observing social distancing and other safety measures, of course); buy gift certificates and use them when stores reopen; do online shopping with local businesses, where available; get take-out from local restaurants, or buy gift certificates from them to use when they reopen for dining in. We will all need your continued support in order to make it through this, and to keep our towns active and thriving. It is very sad to walk downtown right now and see how empty everything is (no matter where downtown is for you). None of us wants to see that continue for the long-term.

Jennifer

While we can't necessarily control what's going on in the world outside our own little corners of it, there is much we can do to help heal our minds and bodies, with the help of a little gardening. The month of April offers many opportunities to do some gardening, both inside and out, that can help us have some small sense of control:

Indoors:

Inventory seeds to make sure you have what you need. Our seed inventory is still pretty high, so let us know if you want us to hold onto anything for you. I am also working on getting that inventory on our website soon. We will also have lots of veggie and herb seedling for your gardens – once we reopen – including broccoli, cabbage, kale, 13 varieties of tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, eggplant, and lots of herbs.



If you are starting plants from seed, early April is the time to start eggplant, pepper, and tomato seeds indoors, so they will be ready to put out in your garden in about eight weeks. These heat-loving plants should not go outside until all chance of frost has passed, and nighttime temperatures are consistently above 50°, which is usually around Memorial Day. Start basil indoors by mid-month, but wait until just about the end of the month to get squash and cucumbers started – they should go out at about the same time as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, but only need about 4 weeks of indoor growth to start.

Some flowers that can be started indoors in early April include alyssum, bells of Ireland, calendula, cerinthe, columbine, hollyhocks. Start cardinal climber, cosmos, salvia, thunbergia, and zinnias mid-month. Cornflowers can be started near the end of April. All of these get planted outdoors after the last frost, in mid- to late-May.

Make sure your garden tools are ready for the season – clean and sharpen pruners, loppers, and shovels. Keeping tools sharp, including shovels, will make your gardening tasks much easier. Fine Gardening offers some good [tips](#) for how to clean and sharpen lots of different tools.



Check gloves and garden hoses and replace or repair those with holes. Assess garden supports and stakes to make sure they are in good shape, replacing whatever won't make it through the season.

Have your lawn mower and other power equipment serviced so that it's ready to go when the grass really starts growing. Speaking of mowing, now is a great time to think about how you will maintain your lawn over the season, and how you can help pollinators while doing so. MSU Extension's article on [Smart Lawns for Pollinators](#) has some great tips for helping, or at least not harming, pollinators while keeping your lawn looking great.

Before starting to plant outdoors, test your soil (we have a very easy and reliable testing kit in stock). Your soil conditions change over time, so it's best to do this every year. Knowing what your soil is lacking makes giving it what it needs to support good plant growth so much easier.

Outdoors:

Be careful about walking around on your lawn and in your gardens while the ground is wet. Walking on wet ground can compact the soil and compacted soil doesn't allow water, air, or nutrients to reach plants' roots.

As it starts to warm up, pulling mulch away from plants that are starting to poke up out of the ground can help the soil warm up more quickly. Plan to cover the plants back up if temps head below freezing at night. Adding a top dressing of compost to your soil, after you pull the mulch back, can help improve soil structure and fertility. Wait to add new mulch to your planting beds, trees, and shrubs until the soil has warmed up fully – usually after Mother's Day. Putting

down new mulch too soon can keep the soil from warming up, and slow your plants' growth and flowering.

April is generally a good time to clean up yard debris – branches that have fallen, driveway gravel plowed onto the lawn, etc. – to make lawn-mowing easier. If you have leaves left on the lawn, it's a good idea to get those up as well. Just a thin layer of leaves left on the lawn can smother it. Wait until it's consistently warm out – daytime temps consistently over 50° – so that beneficial insect larva over-wintering in them have had a chance to emerge.



On a dry day, rake them into a pile and then run them over with a lawn mower to chop them into small pieces. These bits of leaves make a great (free!) mulch that you can add to your flower beds, trees, and shrubs.

Also wait until daytime temperatures are consistently in the 50s to cut back grasses and most perennials that you left standing over the winter. Some beneficial insects spend the winter in the hollow stems and on the leaves of your plants, so waiting to cut them back will mean they are able to help your garden throughout the upcoming season. If you feel that you just have to cut things back and clean up earlier, don't discard what you remove – carefully place it somewhere else on your property that is out of sight. If you remove the debris from your yard altogether, you remove those insects (bees, butterflies, and other beneficials like praying mantis) from your yard as well, and lose the great things they can do for your gardens.

Wait until the end of the month to cut back semi-woody and woody perennials, then decide how much you want to trim based on where you see new growth, and how you want the plant to appear. Semi-woody perennials are ones that form woody stems, but aren't as substantial as true shrubs or trees, and include Russian sage, lavender, and some thymes.

Apply weed preventer to your lawn early this month, before the soil has warmed up enough to allow weed seeds to germinate. Corn gluten is an organic weed preventer that helps keep the seeds of

dandelion, crab grass, and other weeds from putting down roots when they germinate. It also naturally contains nitrogen, which can help get the lawn growing. It won't kill perennial weeds that already exist in your lawn, but will keep new seeds from taking hold.

Once the soil in your garden is workable, pea, lettuce, and spinach seeds can be planted. The simple way to tell if your soil is ready to be worked in (and on) is to take a handful of soil and squeeze it. When you open your hand, if the ball stays together, it's too wet. If it falls apart and is a bit crumbly, then it's safe to venture into the garden. Radishes and carrots should wait until the soil has warmed up a little more (at least 40°). Cabbage and kale transplants, as well as onion sets, can generally go out by mid-month; broccoli and cauliflower transplants should be OK to go out by the end of the month. The absolute best way to tell when it's time to plant seeds is by using a soil thermometer – different seed varieties germinate best at different soil temperatures. The University of California's Cooperative Extension has a really handy [chart](#) with information about proper soil temperature for seed germination for lots of veggie plants.



Pansies and primrose can also go out in the garden now (unfortunately, we are not able to get them until restrictions on non-essential businesses are lifted – even though I truly think flowers are essential for all of us right now). We can expect a few big dips in temperatures still, and new growth is more tender than old, so your plants are more vulnerable at this time. Row covers can help protect your plants from frost and freeze, by keeping the warmth of the soil around the plant. If the forecast is calling for nighttime temps to get near freezing, cover the plants before the sun goes down.

Bachelor's buttons, calendula, phlox, and sweet pea seeds can be planted outdoors later in the month, as they need slightly lower soil temperatures to germinate than many other flowers.

Towards the end of the month, divide summer-blooming perennials that you didn't get to in the fall. If you divide spring bloomers in early spring, they may not bloom this year, so it's better to wait until after they have bloomed.

Plant dormant trees and shrubs once the soil can be worked. Proper planting of trees and shrubs is important in ensuring that they survive and thrive. The Arbor Day foundation has [details](#) for planting various types of trees, which can also be applied to shrubs.

For the birds:

Put up birdhouses now. If you're interested in attracting bluebirds to your yard, the Michigan Bluebird Society has lots of great [tips](#) on choosing boxes, the best location for them, and how to protect nesting birds from predators.



Clean out existing bird houses, but check to make sure they aren't already being occupied first. If the nesting materials in the box look at all new and fresh, leave them – it's an indication you already have tenants. If the materials look old, clean them out to give the birds a fresh start.

If you're considering putting out nesting materials for your birds, it's important to know what to put out – some materials can be dangerous to birds. Check out the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's [website](#) to learn about best practices to help nesting birds.

Hummingbirds are heading our way! Right now, they are still a bit south of us, but it won't be too long before we start seeing them at our feeders, along with orioles. Make sure your feeders are ready for them – check for cracks and replace them if needed. As the temperatures start to warm up, put your feeders out during the day to help early arrivers find food. If the temps dip below freezing at night, be sure to bring the feeders indoors to prevent cracking. To

keep up on hummingbird migration this spring, check out this [website](#) that tracks their movements.

Happy Gardening!

We're Online!

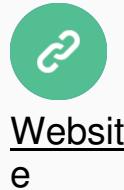
And we're adding items to our online shop all the time, so check back often.

The screenshot shows the Garden Mill website's shop page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Products (with a dropdown arrow), Community, News & Events, About, Resources, and Log In. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: Home / Shop. The main heading is "Shop". It displays "Showing 1–24 of 138 results" and a "Default sorting" dropdown. There are four product cards shown in a row:

- Gift Certificate**
\$10.00 – \$200.00
[Select options](#) [Add to cart](#)
- 12in Cedar Plant Caddy**
\$22.00
[Add to cart](#)
- 6 Gallon Galvanized Seed Can**
\$25.00
[Add to cart](#)
- Baccto Lite Potting Soil 20qt**
\$9.99
[Add to cart](#)

Below these are two more product cards:

- Baccto Lite Potting Soil 20qt**
\$9.99
[Add to cart](#)
- 12in Cedar Plant Caddy**
\$22.00
[Add to cart](#)



Don't forget to visit our [website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) to keep up on all the fun stuff going on at the store. We also post tips and articles we find interesting on gardening and birding to Facebook regularly.

Garden Mill

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Store Hours:

Call us if you need something.

Located in historic downtown Chelsea, Michigan, The Garden Mill is a destination for all seasons. We feature unique and hand-crafted artifacts to adorn your garden and home. Browse through our store and you will find eclectic wind chimes, bubbling fountains, classic garden sculptures, and a colorful assortment of plant containers.

We carry a large collection of wrought iron and rustic garden features that will add character and grace to your gardens and living space. For our feathered friends, we offer whimsical, and completely functional, birdhouses, feeders, and baths that will attract visitors year-round. For the children in your life, we offer garden gear, bug catchers, garden fairies, and other garden treasures. We even have seed kits for your budding gardeners.

Our store changes with the seasons, so be sure to take time and explore our new offerings.

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