



North Idaho Gardener's Monthly Guide

The Basics:

- **Know your garden zone!** USDA Hardiness Zones are found here (<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>), just type in your address. Use this zone number when choosing plants for your garden.
- **Know your season!** Look up typical frost dates for your location (<https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates/zipcode/83815>). The Coeur d'Alene growing season is approximately 165 days (April 29-October 12). But plants are placed out in the garden typically around Mother's Day, and frosts can occur at any time so be prepared to protect your plants from frost and watch the weather reports.
- **Use a garden journal!** Keep a garden journal to record important information and observations from year to year.
- **Univ. of Idaho's Extension Office – Master Gardener Clinic** for plant, insect, disease guidance <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/county/kootenai/garden/clinic>
- **Join your local Garden Club!** There are several local garden clubs in our area that welcome gardeners of every level and experience. Start with the Coeur d'Alene Garden Club's website (www.CdaGardenClub.com) for a link to the different area garden clubs. These clubs are wonderful ways to meet like-minded people, share plants, and gain a great understanding of the area's growing culture and needs.

Trusted Resources:

- **University of Idaho Extension:** www.uidaho.edu/extension
- **Purdue Plant and Pest Diagnostic Laboratory:** www.ppd.l.purdue.edu
- **Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder:** www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder
- **Cornell University's Vegetable Growing Guides:** www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening
- **Washington State University's Hortsense:** www.hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu
- **Calypso (CDA) Chapter of the Native Plant Society** at <https://idahonativeplants.org/calypso/>

Happy Gardening!

May your green thumb thrive, your harvests be bountiful, and your flowers always bring a smile!

January: Planning and Preparation

January is all about dreaming and planning. With the right preparation, you're setting the stage for a fantastic gardening year. Enjoy the quiet of winter while getting excited for the growth ahead!

Garden Tasks:

- Review seed catalogs and start planning your garden layout, order seeds. Popular seed catalog companies:
 - Snake River Seed Cooperative: www.snakeriverseeds.com
 - Seed Savers Exchange: www.seedsavers.org
 - Coeur d'Alene Library – seed exchange (upstairs by reference desk)
 - Johnny's Selected Seeds: www.johnnyseeds.com
 - Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds: www.rareseeds.com
- Check your tools, clean, sharpen, and repair as needed.
- Begin forcing bulbs like hyacinths and amaryllis indoors.

Plant Highlights:

- Conifers, trees, and shrubs with colorful twigs will be prominent in garden during winter.
- You can research native Idaho plants here: <https://idahonativeplants.org/northern-idaho-guide/>
- Native plant--Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*): This shrub retains its white berries throughout winter, adding interest to your landscape.
- Native plant--Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*): Its leathery leaves and yellow flowers (in late winter) bring color to your garden during the colder months.

February: Seed Starting and Pruning

February is a month of beginnings. Seedlings start to sprout, and pruning ensures healthy growth. Each small step now will yield big results come spring!

Garden Tasks:

- Start seeds indoors for cool-season crops like broccoli, cauliflower, and onions.
- Prune fruit trees, grapevines, and shrubs while they're still dormant.
- Check stored bulbs and tubers for rot or disease.
- Plan your vegetable garden layout, rotating crops from previous years.
- Keep bird feeders filled to support your feathered friends during the cold.

Plant Highlights:

- Lenten roses (hellebores), snowdrops, flowering currant, will bloom February-March
- Native plant--Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*): The bright red stems add a stunning contrast against the snow.
- Native plant--Western Larch (*Larix occidentalis*): This deciduous conifer holds its golden needles longer than others, offering beauty even in the winter.

March: Early Planting and Garden Prep

March brings the first signs of life back to the garden. The days grow longer, and the earth begins to thaw, giving you a head start on the growing season. It's the perfect time to get your hands dirty!

Garden Tasks:

- Direct sow seeds of cool-season crops like peas, spinach, and radishes as soon as the soil can be worked.
- Begin hardening off seedlings started indoors by gradually exposing them to outdoor conditions.
- Prune ornamental grasses and perennials that were left standing over winter.
- Spray fruit trees with dormant oil right before leaves open
- Start your early spring garden cleanup, removing any dead plant material.
- Apply a slow-release fertilizer to flower beds and lawns.

Plant Highlights:

- Crocus, daffodil, early tulips will begin blooming. The brilliant yellow Forsythia Bush will usher in Spring.
- Native plant--Yellowbells (*Fritillaria pudica*): One of the first native flowers to bloom in early spring, brightening the landscape with its cheerful yellow.
- Native plant--Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*): This early bloomer's unique, fuzzy seed heads make it a garden standout.

April: Full Swing Spring

April is a time of rapid growth and vibrant blooms. The garden comes alive with color and fragrance, setting the tone for a season of abundance. Your hard work is paying off as the garden truly comes into its own!

Garden Tasks:

- Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, and perennials.
- Sow seeds for root vegetables like carrots, beets, and parsnips.
- Divide perennials like hostas and daylilies as they emerge.
- Apply compost to flower and vegetable beds
- Apply mulch around new plantings to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.
- Install supports for tall plants like peonies and delphiniums.
- Start a compost pile or turn your existing one.
- Place wasp and hornet traps out: The western yellowjacket trap should be properly installed in late April when the queen is foraging for nesting material and protein, usually in late April and throughout May. Apparently, no other bees or wasps are attracted to a baited wasp trap.

Plant Highlights:

- Hyacinth, tulips, will be highlighted in garden
- Native plant--Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*): This small tree or shrub blooms in April, producing clusters of white flowers that attract pollinators.

- Native plant--Blue Camas (*Camassia quamash*): Known for its striking blue flowers, it's a springtime favorite in Idaho.

May: Peak Planting Season

May is the month where everything comes together. The garden is in full swing, with new plants taking root and flowers blooming everywhere. It's a time of joy, as the garden begins to reflect the beauty of your efforts.

Garden Tasks:

- Plant warm-season crops like tomatoes, peppers, and beans after the last frost date.
- Direct sow flowers like zinnias, sunflowers, and marigolds.
- Thin out seedlings to prevent overcrowding and ensure healthy growth.
- Monitor for pests and diseases, taking early action if needed.
- Keep up with weeding and mulching to maintain healthy beds.
- Put out hummingbird feeders in late May, when hummingbirds typically arrive. You can leave the feeder up until the end of September to help migrating hummingbirds on their way south.

Plant Highlights:

- Lilacs, Bleeding Heart, allium, tulips, candytuft, yellow alyssum, are in bloom
- Native plant--Western Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*): A delicate red and yellow flower that blooms in late spring, perfect for attracting hummingbirds.
- Native plant--Arrowleaf Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*): A showy wildflower with bright yellow, sunflower-like blooms.

June: Growing and Maintenance

June is a month of abundance and beauty. Your garden is flourishing, with vegetables ready to harvest and flowers blooming profusely. It's a time to enjoy the fruits of your labor while keeping an eye on maintenance to ensure continued success.

Garden Tasks:

- Keep up with watering, especially for newly planted or young plants.
- Harvest early crops like lettuce, spinach, and radishes.
- Deadhead spent flowers to encourage continuous blooming.
- Fertilize your vegetable garden to support growth during the peak season.
- Stake or cage tall plants to prevent them from falling over.

Plant Highlights:

- Poppies, peony, sedum, iris, allium, early clematis are blooming
- Native plant--Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.): These drought-tolerant beauties come in various colors and are a magnet for pollinators.
- Native plant--Bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*): A small, but striking pink flower that thrives in rocky, dry soils.

July: Mid-Summer Care

July is when your garden hits its stride. The vegetables are producing, flowers are in full bloom, and the days are long and sunny. It's a time to enjoy the rewards of your efforts while preparing for the next phase of the gardening season.

Garden Tasks:

- Water deeply and consistently, especially during hot, dry spells.
- Harvest frequently to encourage continued production in your vegetable garden.
- Cut back perennials that have finished blooming to tidy up beds.
- Keep an eye out for pests and diseases, removing any affected plant material.
- Start planning for your fall garden, ordering seeds if needed.

Plant Highlights:

- Roses, clematis, lilly, daisy, hydrangea, lavender, rudbeckia, phlox, are in bloom
- Native plant--Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*): Tall spikes of pink flowers make this a standout in the summer landscape.
- Native plant--Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*): An easy-to-grow, drought-tolerant plant with white to pinkish flowers that bloom all summer.

August: Harvest and Preserve

August is a month of abundance and preparation. The garden is full of life, and your hard work is yielding a bountiful harvest. It's also a time to think ahead, preserving the summer's bounty and planning for the fall season.

Garden Tasks:

- Continue harvesting vegetables and herbs, preserving any excess through canning, drying, or freezing.
- Water consistently, especially during dry spells, and mulch to conserve moisture.
- Sow fall crops like kale, broccoli, and turnips.
- Deadhead annuals and perennials to extend their blooming period.
- Start collecting seeds from flowers and vegetables for next year.

Plant Highlights:

- Sunflowers, penstemon, sedum, hollyhock, black-eyed susans, dahlias, are showy
- Native plant--Mountain Aster (*Symphotrichum ascendens*): This late-blooming aster adds a touch of purple to your garden in late summer.
- Native plant--Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.): A tall plant with bright yellow flowers, providing nectar for bees and butterflies.

September: Transition to Fall

September is a time of transition. The garden begins to wind down, but the promise of spring is planted with each bulb you tuck into the soil. It's a time to reflect on the season and prepare for the restful months ahead.

Garden Tasks:

- Plant fall bulbs like tulips, hyacinth, daffodils, and crocuses for spring blooms.
- Start cleaning up the garden, removing spent plants and debris.
- Sow cover crops like clover or rye to improve soil health.
- Divide and transplant perennials as needed.
- Harvest the last of your summer crops before the first frost hits.

Plant Highlights:

- Dahlias are at their peak! Snapdragons, roses, yarrow, asters, coneflowers, in bloom
- Native plant--Western Goldenrod (*Solidago occidentalis*): Adds a splash of gold to the late-season garden.
- Native plant--Purple Aster (*Symphotrichum laeve*): Blooms well into the fall, providing late-season color.

October: Clean Up and Planting

October is about closure and preparation. The garden rests, ready for winter, while you tidy up and set the stage for the next growing season. It's a time of quiet reflection and anticipation for the beauty that will return.

Garden Tasks:

- Plant garlic and shallots for a summer harvest next year.
- Rake up leaves and add them to your compost pile or use as mulch.
- Protect tender plants with frost covers or by moving pots indoors.
- Dig tender bulbs (dahlias, begonias, gladiolas, etc.) and store for winter.
- Clean and store garden tools, pots, and hoses for the winter.
- Apply layer of compost on top of planting beds.
- Drain and store hoses and irrigation systems to prevent freezing.
- Finish planting spring bulbs before the ground freezes.
- Check houseplants for pests and bring them indoors if they aren't already.

Plant Highlights:

- Red lobelia, grasses, trees are at their best
- Native plant--Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*): This evergreen ground cover produces red berries in the fall.
- Native plant--Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*): Adds vibrant red stems to the fall and winter landscape.

November: Prepare for Winter

November is about protection and reflection. As you prepare your garden for winter, take a moment to appreciate the season that has passed and the beauty that lies ahead. The garden may be resting, but your dreams for next year are just beginning.

Garden Tasks:

- Apply a thick layer of mulch around the base of perennials, shrubs, and trees to insulate roots against freezing temperatures. This helps retain moisture and protect plants from the freeze-thaw cycles.
- Final Cleanup: Clear out any remaining debris, dead plants, and fallen leaves from your garden beds to prevent overwintering pests and diseases. Compost healthy material, but discard any diseased plants.
- Collect and store any unused seeds in a cool, dry place to ensure their viability for next season. Clean and oil garden tools before storing them to prevent rust and damage over winter.
- Prepare for Snow: If heavy snow is expected, consider protecting delicate shrubs with burlap wraps or snow barriers. Make sure to knock off heavy snow from branches to prevent breakage.
- Check on Houseplants: If you've brought houseplants indoors, keep an eye out for pests like spider mites or aphids. Also, reduce watering as plants typically enter a dormant phase with lower light levels.

Plant Highlights:

- Native plant--Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*): A beautiful evergreen that adds structure and greenery to the winter landscape.
- Native plant--Common Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*): This shrub holds onto its striking white berries well into winter, offering food for birds and adding visual appeal to the dormant landscape.

December: Winter Interest and Reflection

December is a time to rest, reflect, and plan. As your garden sleeps under a blanket of snow, take joy in the memories of the past season and the excitement of what's to come. Winter is the perfect time to dream big for next year's garden!

Garden Tasks:

- Take a break and enjoy the winter garden—look for winter interest provided by evergreens, berries, and seed heads left for birds.
- Plan for next year's garden by reviewing what worked and what didn't this past season.
- Start thinking about new plants or garden features you'd like to add next year.
- Prune any damaged branches from trees and shrubs to prevent further breakage from snow or ice.
- Keep bird feeders filled and provide fresh water for wildlife.

Plant Highlights:

- Native plant--Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*): This iconic evergreen provides shelter for wildlife and adds beauty to the winter landscape.

- Native plant--Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*): While it loses its leaves, the bright red berries often persist into winter, offering food for birds.