



# Grandpa Gardener

## *Growing Gardens. Growing Children.™*

By Grandpa Gardener



### Laying the Groundwork for Spring Planting

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Happy New Year! Believe it or not—it's time to start preparing for Spring planting! Many of have just put away the holiday decorations and are staying indoors while experiencing cold and freezing nights. However, as we are nearing February in a rather warm and sunny Tucson, it's not too soon to get active, venture outside, and lay the groundwork for a beautiful and bountiful Spring garden. According to the Tucson Botanical Gardens, March 15<sup>th</sup> is the official date for Spring planting. Nevertheless, we are fortunate to live in a southwestern climate which may allow for an earlier planting date.

As we prepare for Spring gardening, this is also a perfect time to reconnect with our neighbors, local schools, and Garden Clubs and volunteer to help one another with garden preparation, planting ideas and techniques, garden plans, composting, etc. Consequently, assuming that you will be planting outdoors, here are a few things you need to know before you get ready to plant seeds that will thrive and grow!

- 1) **Tool-time.** To ensure that you have everything you need to begin tilling the soil and preparing for planting, you must take inventory of your hand tools, wagons, hoses, and irrigation lines and inspect them for wear and tear as well as for safety issues. You should inspect your equipment on a regular basis and replace as necessary.
- 2) **Gear up.** Along with the proper tools, all Good Gardeners need proper garden gear and apparel to protect themselves from the sun. You should periodically inspect and replace your garden gloves, protective sun hat, SPF cotton clothing, and non-skid shoes. You should also check and maintain kneepads and/or have a comfortable kneeling pad for ground planting.
- 3) **Begin your ground work.** As we discussed last month, new soil created by composting will be perfect to add to your upcoming garden. This is the time to begin clearing a garden space, overturning and tilling the ground, adding nutrients and vitamins so that all is ready for planting seeds or transplanting seedlings.
- 4) **Plan it before you plant it.** In order to gain the most from your garden, a garden plan or map is necessary. Sketching or drawing the design of your future garden allows for timely planning and planting. Garden maps take into consideration the where, what, when, and how questions of gardening. For instance, some of these questions might include:
  - Where is a proper location for a garden with regard to sun, shade, and water? Where will each plant be placed within the garden space?
  - What kinds of suitable plants are appropriate for my geographical climate zone?
  - When is the proper time to plant?
  - How much space do I need between seeds or plants? How deep must each seed be planted? How much soil and nutrients do my plants need? How much sun is required, and how often do I water or irrigate?
- 5) **Make a list and check it twice.** After all is said and done, there is still some time before actual planting can begin, so make a list of any tools or supplies that you may need and then review and update the list as necessary. Also as Good Gardeners know, a garden is an organic cycle that is in a constant state of growth and transition. Thus, we must keep an ongoing list of items in order to maintain and allow our gardens to thrive. This rotating list can include purchasing new tools, making tool repairs, compost maintenance, and which seeds to plant, etc.

We hope these simple ideas are helpful as you look forward to a new year and a new garden. Until next month, Happy New Year and Good Gardening! Please visit us at [www.grandpagardener.com](http://www.grandpagardener.com).