

Your Garden

Ten Ways To Get Prepared For Planting

(NAPSA)—When the weather warms, many people's thoughts turn to how to make sure their yard is in tip-top shape for planting. These 10 tips can help get your garden off to a great start:

1. Make a plan. First, decide what to plant. One thing you may want to consider is pollinator-attractant plants. Yellow, blue or purple flowers make your garden more appealing to bees. The Pollinator Partnership's Bee Smart mobile app helps gardeners select the best plants in their area. You can visit FeedABee.com to view pollinator gardens from around the country for inspiration.

2. Observe the current state of your garden. See how well last year's planting choices worked out. Consider placement of compatible plants, sunlight, shade and irrigation.

3. Tidy up. Clean out old plants and weeds from last year's garden, including the roots. Remove winter mulch or pine straw, too.

4. Survey the soil. Make sure the soil contains the right nutrients with a soil sampling kit, found at home and garden centers. This analysis will inform your decisions on fertilizing methods. Aerate your soil by breaking it up so air, water and nutrients penetrate the plant roots.

5. Take care of pests. Check for slugs, snails or aphids, treating any infestations you find.

6. If it's broken, fix it. Fix broken structures and gardening tools. Also, treat wood with a preservative during dry periods to prevent cracks and splitting.

7. Gather the tools you'll need and make sure they're clean. Sharpen and clean your



Proper planning can help you have a glorious, pollinator-attractant garden and save you time, trouble and money.

tools, as proper maintenance saves you money and keeps disease from spreading between cuttings.

8. Planting vegetables? Consider raised beds. These warm quickly, encourage good irrigation and aeration, and are excellent for difficult soil. In addition, you'll be able to reach every corner to pull young weeds as they appear.

9. Prepare a compost pile. Buy or make a compost bin and throw in all your garden waste, grass clippings, paper, wood prunings, and fruit and veggie peelings. Turn and aerate it with a garden fork every month.

10. Label your plants. If you're growing food, learning to identify plants or sharing a community garden, plant markers are a must. Use the plastic markers that came with the plants or buy or make your own from pebbles, bamboo skewers or broken terra-cotta pots. Label your plants with the variety name and date you planted it.