

GET YOUR GARDEN IN SHAPE FOR SUMMER

By Anna Mouton

Beat those winter bod blues

Would you like to know the secret of a beautiful summer garden? Yes? *You care for it in winter.* Many of us might think this time of year is for staying indoors with a glass of wine and the latest issue of MARKtoe! But real gardeners are out there preparing their plots for spring. Just as you need to get to the gym now if you want to look good on the beach later, building a buff garden starts today.

This month we've put together a 10-step plan for your garden. Follow our advice and you'll be the envy of your friends by Christmas.

1. Make a fresh start

Start with a thorough clean up. Remove any tired annuals. Annuals are plants that grow from seed to flower in a single year. Once their performance is over you can pull them up and compost them. In contrast, perennials are plants that live for several years. The top growth layer of herbaceous perennials – including ornamental grasses – often dies down or becomes inactive during winter. Cut this back completely to encourage new growth.

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Identify and clear out any plants that have expired. Many of these will be victims of the drought. Others may be old or simply not suited to your garden. Next, get rid of those plants that you wish would die. These include ugly, sluggish and straggly individuals. You might think that dislike is not a good enough reason to remove something healthy, but be resolute – see this as an opportunity to make room for a plant you've always wanted.

2. The kindest cut

Winter is an ideal time to prune. The plants are dormant and the structure of deciduous trees and shrubs will be clearer. Pruning is easy if you remember your objectives. Firstly, to remove any dead or damaged branches. Secondly, cut back branches that may rub against others and to open up the center of the plant. This will promote the health of trees and shrubs. Pruning is also used to control growth and maximise flower and fruit production. Specifics vary for each plant.

Always use sharp tools of an appropriate size. If you're carving through a branch with secateurs, stop! Fetch your pruning saw. When removing larger limbs, take care to prevent the branch from snapping and tearing the bark as you saw through it. Prune to either a bud or the base of a branch. Stumps are unsightly and may die back or become infected.



Synsport Lawn Landscape, 20mm p/m

Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.

3. Realise your dreams

Once the garden is tidy and all the unwanted plants are gone, you can start planning. Don't be afraid of having big dreams, even if you have a small garden! Winter is the perfect time to study the structure of your garden and spot gaps. Is your garden boring when nothing is in flower? Does it look tired in the middle of summer? Think about adding evergreen shrubs and topiary for year-round interest – clipped balls are a fantastic solution. Invest in a few drought-resistant specimens and plant them now.

Look out for eyesores like patches where the lawn doesn't grow. Try replacing the turf with groundcover. Are there areas congested with too many plants that have become too large? Most trees and shrubs respond well to being moved in winter. Improving your garden design in winter will set you up for many years of showy summers.



Synsport Petscape Turf, 35mm p/m

Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.



- Synsport Synthetic Grass Off Cut Box, 2m x 1m
- Kirschhoffs Evergreen, 500g

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4. Winter planting for summer success

If you've had some rain and the soil is moist, go ahead and plant. Trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials can all be planted now. They may look like there's no change for the next couple of months, but below the ground they're hard at work, growing strong roots to see them through summer.

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Prepare roomy planting holes to comfortably hold the root ball. Add some compost and a generous handful of bonemeal. Position the plant at the same level it was in its pot or bag. Firm down – don't compact – the soil. Add water even if the ground is damp. This helps to settle the soil around the roots and remove pockets of air.

- Plastic Watering Can, 5L
- Double Grow Compost 30"

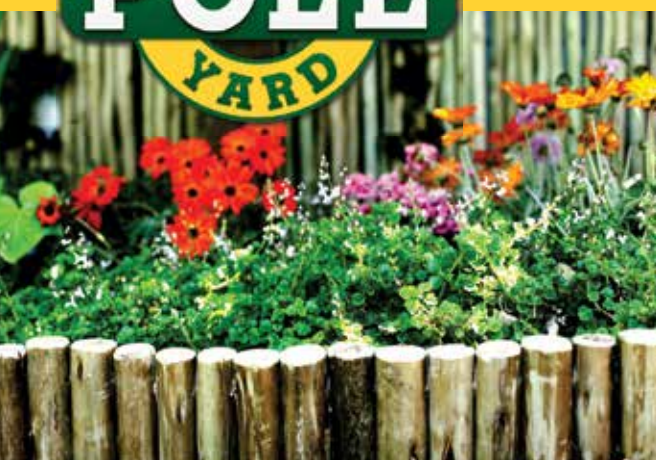


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Create a watering basin around new plants. The basin must be large. Aim for a diameter of 60 centimeters and a depth of 20 centimeters. For the first growing season, water every two to three weeks. Fill the basin to the top. The water will slowly sink into the soil, reaching a good depth and encouraging the plant to send roots downwards. Be realistic about how many new plants you can support during the summer and plan accordingly.



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5. Much ado about mulch

Mulch is a layer of material spread over the soil surface. Inorganic mulches include gravel and pebbles, whereas organic mulches include compost and bark chips. The advantage of organic mulches is that they gradually break down and improve soil structure. All mulches retain soil moisture and suppress weeds. They also reduce runoff and compaction. Mulch is the greatest ally of the drought-stricken gardener.

The best time to apply mulch is after some rain while the soil is damp. That means now! Spread a layer of five to 10 centimeters deep over any bare ground. Leave a small gap around the trunks of trees and shrubs. Trunks may rot if in direct contact with mulch.



• Double Grow Bark Nuggets 30"

Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.

6. Feed me, Seymour

Audrey from the Little Shop of Horrors isn't the only plant crying out for food. Most plants appreciate some extra nutrition. But if you're hoping for a trim summer garden, go easy on the fertilisers. Too much nitrogen can promote lush growth and increase water demands in the warm season. Rather than fertilising too generously, improve soil structure and composition by adding organic matter like compost. Reserve fertilisers for the athletes of the garden: annual flowers, roses, vegetables and turf.



• Protek Guanoflo, 200ml • Protek NutriGreen Gwano Pellets, 9kg
• Atlantic Fertilisers Flower & Fruit, 5kg • Kirchhoffs Vigorosa, 4.5kg

Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.

7. Grassroots action

For those of you who still have a lawn, winter is a great time to dig it up. Plant drought-resistant groundcover instead. Not what you want? Well, then you have some work ahead of you to prime your turf for summer. Recent rains and mild winter days will promote growth, so keep up with the mowing. But stay off the lawn in very wet weather, especially if you have heavy soil. Don't mow too short – the grass needs leaves to build up reserves.

Check your lawn for areas of compaction and break it up by using a garden fork or turf aerator. Running grasses benefit from the removal of dead material in late winter or early spring. Scarify the lawn by vigorous raking and follow with topdressing. Use a low-nitrogen high-phosphorous fertiliser in winter to promote root development – like 2:3:2.

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Ducale Flowerbox : Terracotta
Size : 60/80cm
* Excluding Saucer



Elba Bowl : Terracotta
Size : 20/25/30/35/40/50/60cm
* Excluding Saucer



Campana Bell : Terracotta & Green Size :
15/19/22/25/32/37/42/47/55cm &
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8. Contain your joy

Containers are a great way to bring variety and colour to the smallest garden. You can turn a patio into paradise with a few pots. And don't forget about houseplants. Besides being beautiful, research shows that they improve air quality and they even stimulate our creativity! If your garden seems a little bleak in winter, you can compensate with colourful containers.

Plants in pots depend on you for absolutely everything. Be sure to water them regularly, but don't overwater. Think moist, not mud. Feed frequently. Watch out for pests and spray as soon as you spot a problem. Use potting soil, not garden soil, in containers and keep in mind that you need to repot every year or two. Seize the opportunity to try out new plants and keep the display fresh.



- Idel Classic Pots, 16cm / 20cm
- Idel Window Box & Saucer, 40cm
- Idel Garden Bowl Elba TC, 30cm / 40cm / 50cm

 Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.

9. Lay weeds to waste

Weeds are a fact of winter in the Western Cape. At times they seem set to take over the entire garden, but don't lose hope. If you don't want to see them again next year, all you need to do is get out there and start pulling them up. Apply mulch to any bare soil after weeding to suppress new growth. For more information on winning the war on weeds, read the June issue of MARKtoe!




10. Clean up your act

As winter melts into spring, your garden will be going wild. Literally wild. Prepare to keep it in control by doing some basic chores now. Check all your gardening tools and equipment. Clean, sharpen, oil, repair and service these as needed. Replace whatever can't be salvaged. You don't want to get up on a Saturday morning in September to find the grass has grown two feet during the week and the lawnmower won't start.


Many keen gardeners propagate their own plants from seed or cuttings. During summer, empty pots and trays have a way of piling up. Winter is a great time to wash, sort and pack them away. It's the same with plant labels. While you're at it, go through all your seed packets. Make a note in your calendar to sow what you have and buy what you need.



- Kirschhoffs Flower, Vegetable or Herb Seed Foils
- Raw Picture Packet Veg Seeds

 Products available at your nearest Agrimark with special discount prices from 29 August - 29 September 2018.

Then there is the garden shed or the garage – most gardeners have one of these. How tidy is it? You don't have to tell. Just get out there and take action against the forces of chaos. Summer gardening will be far easier and more fun if you're operating from an organised base.

If all this seems like hard work, consider the rewards. You'll go into spring all set up for a stunning summer garden. Meanwhile, you'll get off the couch and into nature, building your own beach bod while you whip your little landscape into shape. 



Vegetables that can be sown now

Western Cape: beetroot, cabbage, carrots, celery, eggplant*, gem squash, lettuce, parsnips, peas, peppers*, radishes, spinach, sweetcorn, tomatoes*, turnips

Eastern Cape: cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplant*, lettuce, parsnips, peppers*, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, tomatoes*, turnips

Northern Cape: beans, beetroot, carrots, eggplant*, gem squash, lettuce, peas, peppers*, radishes, spinach, sweetcorn, Swiss chard, tomatoes*, turnips

*indoors with heat