



# HOME & GARDEN

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## Herbaceous Ornamental Plant Tips

- Avoid the temptation to start seeds too early. Check seed packets for detailed information on starting various types of flowers. Some slow growing flowers like begonia, geraniums, and impatiens should be started 12-14 weeks before the last expected frost. Most other annuals are started about 6-8 weeks before the last frost date. Do not depend on window sill light to grow these seedlings. Annual flower plants are best started and grown indoors under cool, white fluorescent lights. The tubes should be lit for 14-16 hours per day and kept only 1-2 inches from the top of the young seedlings. Don't over-water, and keep the temperature at 70-75 degrees F. during the day and 65 degrees F. at night.
- Spring bulbs are slowly emerging this month. They are first to emerge in sunny locations or south facing slopes. Gardeners often worry about them when there is still some very cold weather ahead. Exposed leaves may experience a little tip browning) by very cold temperatures, but the spring flower display will not be diminished.
- Continue to leave the large seed heads of black-eyed susans, coneflowers and other perennials for birds to feed on over the winter. Remaining stems will be cut down next month, but for now the birds will enjoy these seeds.
- While browsing through seed catalogs consider growing something this year different like annual vines: cardinal climber, hyacinth bean, morning glory, etc. to cover fences, gazebos and trellises. Check seed catalogs for improved varieties, choosing an "All America" selection is always a good bet. Start these seeds indoors under fluorescent lights 6-8 weeks before the last frost, which is around May 10 in Central Maryland.

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