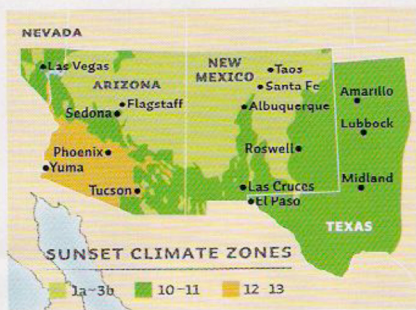


# What to do in your garden

## April



### Planting

**Agaves for shade** Sunset climate zones 12–13: The rich green color and attractive mahogany leaf margins of cow's horn agave (*Agave bovicornuta*) make it a good medium-size choice for shady nooks. For smaller spaces, try diminutive spider agave (*A. bracteosa*), with flexible, spineless stems. In northern exposures, it eventually forms handsome, mound-shaped colonies. Look for plants at local nurseries that carry succulents, or order from Starr Nursery ([www.starr-nursery.com](http://www.starr-nursery.com) or 520/743-7052).

**Citrus** Zones 12–13: Although nursery stocks may begin to run low, April is still a prime month for planting citrus. In colder microclimates, consider 'Meiwa' kumquats and 'Clementine' and 'Kinnow' mandarins. For warmer areas, try 'Hamlin', 'Marrs', and 'Trovita' sweet oranges; 'Rio Red' grapefruit; 'Oroblanco' grapefruit-pummelo hybrid; and lemons ('Improved Meyer' and 'Lisbon').

**Mexican oregano** Zones 10–13: Beginning as early as late April, the wonderfully scented Mexican oregano begins producing a vivid show of light purple flowers. True to its name, the leaves of this mint-family shrub smell and taste like oregano and can be used as a substitute in cooking. Look for the selection 'Lavender Spice', a compact (3-foot-tall by 3-foot-wide) plant with a particularly colorful and enduring display of flowers through fall.

**Perennials and grasses** Zones 1a–3b: For eye-catching combinations, plant colorful

perennials, such as blue flax (*Linum lewisii*) and cardinal penstemon (*Penstemon cardinalis*) with Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) and other ornamental grasses.

**Small desert trees** Zones 10–13: For narrow spots, consider these three appropriately sized trees (none wider than 15 feet). Fragrant, cream-colored puffball blossoms appear repeatedly throughout the warm season on tenaza (*Flavardia pallens*; zones 12–13), a butterfly favorite. The white or pink blossoms and delicate branch pattern of anacacho orchid tree (*Bauhinia lunarioides*; zones 10–13) make it perfect for Japanese-style gardens. Patio-size feather bush (*Lysiloma microphylla thurberi*; zones 12–13) has fine-textured leaves and thornless branches.

**Vegetables** Zones 1a–3b: Set out transplants of broccoli, cabbage, kale, and Swiss chard. Sow seeds of beets, carrots, salad greens, spinach, and turnips. Zone 10: Set out seedlings of eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. Sow seeds of beans, corn, cucumbers, melons, okra, radishes, and squash. Zones 11–13: Set out transplants of eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. Sow seeds of black-eyed peas, carrots, corn, cucumbers, green onions, lima and snap beans, melons, okra, radishes, and squash.

### Maintenance

**Adjust irrigation timers** As temperatures increase, so do the water needs of your garden. To give plants just the right amount, adjust the timer by increasing the number of days per week it operates, but not the number of minutes per cycle.

**Correct iron deficiency** If leaves are yellow but veins remain green, the plant may be suffering from chlorosis caused by iron deficiency. In spring, citrus, lemons, and roses are particularly prone. Treat affected plants with chelated iron, following label instructions. Be careful not to spill it on patios—it will stain the paving. —SCOTT CALHOUN

### Tip from the test garden

**PLANTING SEEDLINGS** Annuals and perennials in 4-inch containers are less expensive than those in gallon cans and quickly reach the size of larger ones.



**STEP 1** After amending soil, dig a hole for each plant that's as deep as the plant's container and an inch or so wider. Remove plants from their pots, and loosen any matted roots with your fingers.



**STEP 2** Place each plant in its hole so that the rootball is even with the soil surface. Fill in the hole by adding soil around the rootball. Lightly press soil to firm the seedling into place, then water gently but thoroughly.