



START NOW TO PREPARE A THRIVING SPRING GARDEN!

Did you take up gardening during quarantine? You're not alone! Planting during times of stress dates back to the "victory gardens" during the World Wars, and the craziness of COVID-19 has been no exception. Compared to 2019, there's been a 36% increase in the amount of people planting herb and vegetable gardens. Did you know there's things you can do this winter to prepare your garden for spring?

Get Rid of Weeds Now, Instead of Later

By pulling weeds in winter, you prevent the seeds from spreading and multiplying – saving yourself the hassle of pulling hundreds of weeds come spring. Try mulching any bare garden areas as a simple and effective way to prevent winter annual weeds from germinating.

Make Friends with Mulch!

Not only does mulch help minimize weeds when spring rolls around, but it's a great way to ensure your soil stays happy during chillier months. Mulch can be used in more than just your garden – use it throughout your whole landscape to prevent water from evaporating as quickly in summer, meaning your plants don't get thirsty and you can water less often! Many local governments provide free or reduced-cost mulch; check with your local city or county to see what's offered near you.

Reach for Less-Toxic Options Instead of Powerful Pesticides

Winter months won't stop pests from preying on your plants. Try less-toxic ways to manage pests instead of attacking your garden with powerful pesticides. Pesticides linger, entering our storm drains through runoff when it rains and traveling untreated to our local waters. For winter pests like cabbage aphids, try spritzing plants with a strong mint tea with a few drops of dishwashing soap added. Peppermint has insect-repelling properties and dish soap helps it stick, banishing pesky aphids with minimal environmental repercussions.

Start Before Spring

If you're new to gardening and want a spring garden, start early! Plan what you'd like to grow and order seeds ahead of time. While you're planning, consider placement. Some spring crops don't thrive when planted next to each other, like snow peas – they can be planted near tomatoes without issue, but onions and garlic tend to stunt their growth.

We hope 2021 brings bountiful crops to your pandemic garden. As you garden, remember to use eco-friendly yard products according to label directions, to reduce the number of pollutants making their way into our local waters. For more pollution prevention and gardening tips, visit www.cccleanwater.org.