



April is For Star Magnolia, Peony Support, and Great Horned Owls



Star Magnolia

Star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) is one of the smallest magnolias, and also, one of the first ornamental shrubs or small trees to bloom in spring. A profuse display of the star-like white flowers arrives before the leaves. Native to Honshu, Japan, it was introduced to the United States in the 1860's. Some cultivars may reach 25 feet in height but most grow into smaller trees or multi-stemmed shrubs. In the image below, there is a star magnolia on the left and a southern magnolia on the right side of the building, creating a white and pink accent.



Star Magnolia

Peony Support



Peonies and other flowering perennials that have a tendency to droop because of their heavy blooms can be helped by using a square of metal grid material. Choose a material made of metal that is sturdy and has openings that will accommodate the size of mature stems - chicken wire will work. Cut a piece and lay it flat over the entire plant as it begins new growth. As the plant gets taller, pull the grid gently up until it is about a foot from the top. As foliage matures, the grid will be hidden, and flowers will be supported. In the image on the right, the red arrow indicates where the grid support is, which is hidden by the leaves. Stakes or other means of support can also be used.

Great Horned Owls



Sounds of Great Horned Owls

Great horned owls, *Bubo virginianus*, are a very common owl in North America. They breed very early, sometimes in February, and prefer old growth woods or stands of trees. Normally they hunt at night, but sometimes they will be seen during the day. Often, they can be found during the day by tracking down crows or other birds that are heard harassing them. A large owl, they can take down sizeable prey like skunks.

Vegetable Planting Guide



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Cool season annuals are cold hardy and thrive in spring and fall when temperatures are below 70° F. These include spinach, peas, onions, kale cabbage, radishes, Swiss chard. Warm season annuals like beans, cucumber, tomato, pepper, squash, and corn should be planted after the last spring frost. They can be damaged by frost, thriving when temperatures are above 70°.

Vegetable Planting Guide

Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine



CT Agricultural Experiment Station



PA Department of Agriculture

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station has issued a Quarantine Order with defined restricted areas for the exotic pest spotted lanternfly, *Lycorma delicatula*. The quarantine order was renewed January 1, 2022 and will remain in effect until December 31, 2022. The purpose of this quarantine is to attempt to stop the spread of this exotic, damaging pest.

Insect Highlights- Spring Mining Bees



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Andrena spp.



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Colletes inaequalis

The mining bees like the *Andrena* and, *Colletes* species shown above are native solitary nesters that dig in sandy soils in spring to make individual nests for a single larva. An egg is laid on a store of pollen and nectar brought into the chamber by the female, and the larva will feed on that, pupate, and emerge as an adult the next spring, or later in the summer, depending upon species. These bees are very docile as they are not protecting a colony. Other native bees are also active in early spring.

Spring Bees

Plant Highlight- Trout Lily



Trout lilies, *Erythronium Americanum*, also known as dog's tooth violet, are a native wildflower that is a spring ephemeral. Occurring in moist, woodlands with abundant humus in the soil, the yellow, nodding, lily-like flowers appear before most native woodland trees have leafed out. Andrena mining bees are attracted to their flowers.

Trout Lily

Animal Highlight- Spotted Salamander



Spotted Salamanders, *Ambystoma maculatum*, are found in habitats that include vernal pools and moist woods. These pools must have sufficient water to ensure that they do not completely dry out before the salamander larvae have developed into their terrestrial forms. Look for eggs and larvae in vernal pools that form reliably year after year since adult spotted salamanders return to the same pool to breed where they developed as a larvae. Eggs masses are often laid around sticks in the water, and they have a layer of clear or cloudy gel around the entire egg mass.

Spotted Salamander

Hummingbird Migration Map



"Ruby throat hummingbird sticking out his tongue" by [Beatnik Photos](#) is marked with [CC BY 2.0](#).

Check it out: <https://www.hummingbirdcentral.com/hummingbird-migration-spring-2022-map.htm>

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Gardening Tips for April

- Cut ornamental grasses back to about 6 inches before new growth appears.
- Cut buddleia, Russian sage, and Montauk daisies to a height of 8-12 inches.
- Prune lavender to 1/3 of its height once new growth appears.
- Prune old, leggy growth from [heather](#) (which flowers on new growth in late summer) but prune [heath](#) (which sets its flower buds in late spring) just enough to shape it in the early spring.
- Pull back [mulch](#) from perennials to allow the soil to warm up but be prepared to temporarily cover them if heavy frosts are predicted.
- Start dahlia tubers in pots indoors in a cool, bright spot. Pinch back tips when they reach inches and transplant outdoors when the ground temperature reaches 60° F.
- Get the jump on weeds in garden beds by pulling out any that overwinter and applying mulch.
- For an instant spring show, fill containers with purchased forced spring bulbs from supermarkets and garden centers.
- Freezing temperatures don't harm pansies, but if they have been grown in a greenhouse they should be gradually exposed to outdoor temperatures before planting.
- Keep [Easter lilies](#) in a moist and brightly lit location. They can be planted in the garden after the danger of frost.
- Divide overcrowded summer or fall blooming perennials.
- Prune rose bushes as buds begin to swell. Remove any winter kill.
- Place [peony](#) supports.
- Do not fertilize lawns until grass is actively growing. Delay crabgrass pre-emergent applications until after forsythia has reached full bloom but before flowering dogwood flowers open.
- Start tuberous begonias and caladiums indoors so they will be ready to plant in the garden by late May to early June after last spring frost

For a more extensive list of tips visit [Gardening Tips for April](#)



Voles can sometimes be deterred by inserting a pot in the ground with the bottom cut out. Leave a couple of inches of the pot above the soil surface and insert the plant inside the pot.

Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micro Nutrients

Send your soil sample in for testing now. For details on submitting a sample, go to [UConn Soil and Nutrient Laboratory](#).

New Prices for Testing at the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab



Effective January 1, 2022, lab fees will be increased slightly for most soil analyses. Our standard nutrient analysis including the pre-paid kits (which includes pH) and soil textural analysis will be \$15/sample and our soluble salts and pH only tests will be \$5. For all soil test pricing, see link below

<https://soiltest.uconn.edu/price.php>

[UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

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UConn Science of GMOs

Things to do/events

[2022 Connecticut Sheep, Wool and Fiber Festival](#)- April 30, 2022 in Vernon, CT at the North Haven Fairgrounds 290 Washington Ave.

[James L. Goodwin State Forest](#)- trail maps are available on-line. Contact them for any upcoming guided tours and other events

[Pequot Library Backyard Composting Workshop](#) on April 22, 12 noon – 1:30 featuring UConn Master Composters, Southport, CT

[Southbury Energy Fair and Green Expo](#) on April 23 from 10 am – 2 pm. Check out the vendors including the UConn Master Composters display table.



[Connecticut Trail Finder](#)- a good resource to find trails in Connecticut

[Bradley Mountain Farm](#)- this farm in Southington has events all year featuring walks with their friendly goats and other fun programs

Science and Nature

Shrews- these small mice- like rodents are very common, and are sometimes mistaken for moles. They have pointy noses and sharp, pointy teeth made for hunting prey, not for gnawing plants.



Weather/ Environment

Circum-horizontal Arc- a rare event, this horizontal rainbow needs conditions to be just right to form.



Photographer: [Carol Waldvogel](#)

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- Advise clients on plant selection and cultural requirements.
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- Accept samples for diagnosis samples either by drop-off or mail.
- Present on gardening topics including IPM, pollinators, lawns, invasive plants and insects, landscaping and gardening with native plants, gardening to support bees, birds and wildlife, soils, compost and other horticultural topics.
- Staff a booth at the annual CT Flower & Garden Show- bring your garden questions and soil samples for free pH testing.
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