Put a spring in your step

WITH spring just around the corner, the weather is about to shift. As we say goodbye to winter, a new variety of plants will be ready to flourish as the temperature slowly rises.

If you're stuck for ideas about what to plant at this time of year, read on to find out the best spring seedling varieties and how to help them thrive!

Spring varieties

Flowers

The best flower varieties to plant in Victoria when spring comes around include salvia, snapdragons, petunias, marigolds and impatiens. After the last frost of the season has passed, sunflowers are a great option to plant. Summer-flowering bulb varieties such as dahlias, liliums and gladioli.

Fruits will tend to struggle a little until around October given the cool temperatures of early spring, however strawberries and rhubarb can be planted in sunny areas. Rockmelon and watermelon will go well after the last frost has passed.

Herbs

Beginning in early spring, herb varieties for the new season include lemon balm, coriander, parsley, dill, sage, thyme and rosemary. Basil should be planted later in the spring to avoid cold and frosty conditions.

Vegetables

Leafy greens such as cabbage, kale, spinach and lettuce should grow nicely from early spring through to the summer, as will more dense vegetables such as beetroot, carrot, radish, leek and sweet corn. Beans, peas and tomatoes do well on stakes when the weather starts to warm, and capsicum, zucchini and cucumber plants flourish in heat more than cold.

Preparation is key

One of the most crucial steps in maintaining a healthy garden is to prepare the garden bed properly. Good soil is a must, with mulch, compost and fertilisers providing much-needed nutrients to growing plants.

Firstly, ensure that all weeds and other debris are removed. This will mean that your new garden has a clean slate without hindrances to their roots.

Though many people think any old soil will do for their gardens, it's important to ensure a good quality soil is used to provide the right vitamins, minerals and other nutrients for your plants. Your local nursery or hardware shop is likely to have a few different options of organic garden soil.

While sourcing your soil, have a look at the selection of compost, mulch and fertilisers available. Mushroom compost and sugar cane mulch are good all-rounders for a general garden, but there are often many other suitable options available.

Fertilisers and plant foods are often specialised to certain plants, so it would be useful to know what kind of varieties you are planting. Alternatively, cow or chicken manure is an effective general fertiliser, but must be mixed in well with soil to avoid burning plants.

Once your soil is on the ground, add a few inches of compost and turn it into the soil. It is important to distribute the compost evenly to ensure all plants are covered well. If you are using cow or chicken manure, now is a good time to mix it in with the soil and compost.

Be sure to follow the distance guidelines on your plants, ensuring they have enough space between them as they grow up and out. Poke your plant tags into the soil in front of each variety to make sure you remember what grows where.

Once your new varieties have been planted, spread a layer of mulch around the garden. Be sure to leave a space around the base of the plants, then follow with a sprinkle of fertilising plant food and a good drink of water and you're all set!

As the weather begins to warm, be sure that your plants receive plenty of water and sun. Likewise, when spending time in the garden over the warmer months means sun protection and water is important for the gardener too. Following these basic steps should put your garden in good stead for the season ahead. Happy planting!