

After the snow, it's time to sow

Dig this simple gardening app

Just because you've spent the last five days digging out from under several feet of snow doesn't mean it's not time to start thinking about your garden. Despite the wild weather swings of the month of March, tomorrow is finally the first day of spring. The increasing hours of daylight inevitably will vanquish winter.

While gardening might literally be the most down to earth thing you can do, there are high-tech tools that can help you succeed. **Garden Time Planner** is an app by Burpee, the company that has been providing seeds, plants, tools and advice to gardeners since 1881.

While not a comprehensive manual on all things green, it is a useful tool for beginning

and experienced gardeners. The app is divided into five sections to help you plan, plant and cultivate your garden.

The first section is called Browse. It contains information on four categories of plants: vegetables, herbs, flowers and fruit. Each category contains information on many individual plants. The plants are presented as a list with a small thumbnail picture next to the name. Tapping on a plant brings you to an information page. The page has a large photo of the plant at the top. A caption below the image has information on how and when to plant it. Scroll down the page and you can access how-to videos and a planting schedule based on your location. You can also add the plant to your "garden" or remove it if it's already there.

The second section of the app is called My Garden. This is where you plant your virtual garden or gardens.

You have to create a free account to use this section. You create a garden by selecting the plants you want to grow in your actual garden in the Browse section. This gives you a list of all the plants you'll need and tells you when the average first and last frosts occur in your garden zone. You also can add notes to help you manage your planting.

The third section is called Planner. This is basically a list of tasks for each plant in your garden. The list is divided into Tasks Due, Tasks Upcoming and Tasks Completed. As you complete a task, you can check it off to move it to the completed section. Selecting a task brings you to the information page for that plant.

The fourth section is called Weather. The app uses your location to provide a brief local weather forecast. There's a link that takes you to a more in-depth forecast with maps, 10-day projections, an almanac and more.

The last section is called How To. This is a collection of all of the videos in the app. Most of them are only a minute or two long and are of uniform, good quality. A pleasant young woman named Chelsey Fields (that's either a stage name or she was destined to do gardening videos) was the host for all the videos I watched. She gives a little background on the plant, shows you how to sow the seeds and gives instructions on their care.

Garden Planner is a simple, easy-to-use app. It's nicely designed with good writing and good-quality images and videos. It won't answer all of your gardening questions, but it will help you get your garden started and manage it throughout the season.

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