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PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



BAVARIA

Whitsun Festival, Rothenburg ob der Tauber | May 22–25, 2026

Just a 35-minute drive for folks stationed at Ansbach, this medieval festival and play is a unique experience for the whole family. The play transports visitors to the 17th century and into the epic legend of the *Meistertrunk*, or “Master Draught.” When the city was under siege during the Thirty Years War, Mayor Georg Nusch made a deal with an opposing general that if he could empty a giant wine goblet in one go, the city would be saved. Find out if he was successful! The festival will also have parades, costumes, bonfires and live music. Purchase tickets in advance. meistertrunk.de



KAISERSLAUTERN

Lautrer Kerwe | May 29–June 8, 2026

“When the fair comes, the good food begins; when the fair ends, it’s porridge again.” Enjoy the largest *folksvest*, or folk festival, in the Westpfalz region spanning over a mile for 11 days of fun and celebrating. Try delicacies like grilled knuckles, schnitzel, churros and more, along with locally brewed beer and wine. There are plenty of thrilling fairground rides and games, plus live music and dance performances. On the final day, fireworks light up the sky. On Family Wednesday, rides and admission prices are half price and free face painting is offered for children. kerwe-kl.de



SPANGDAHLEM

Koblenz Wine Festival | May 8–July 11, 2026

Celebrate the new vintage in the wine city of Koblenz. From May to July, there will be a wide range of events such as wine tastings from five regions and games where you can win prizes. On May 13–14 and June 3–4, visitors can relax on picnic blankets and lounge furniture with a glass of Riesling while listening to music during “Blue Hour.” June 19–20 is “Electronic Wine” weekend; set against the backdrop of the Kaiser Monument, crowds flock to sample wine, listen to electronic music and dance. Check out weinfestival-koblenz.de for the full program.



STUTTGART

Strawberry Festival, Esslingen | June 6, 2026

Every year in June, *Erdbeeren* (strawberries) ripen, and Esslingen turns red with everything strawberry. Visitors can walk down a red carpet as they celebrate the fruit and start of summer, and taste strawberry delicacies like cake, punch, jam, wine and chocolate-covered berries. The motto is “eat, drink, listen to music and enjoy.” For all ages, workshops and strawberry-themed craft activities are offered. There will also be a wheel of fortune competition. esslingen-info.com/en/events/strawberry-festival



WIESBADEN

Fressgass Festival, Frankfurt | May 13–22, 2026

This multi-day event on a shopping street in the heart of Frankfurt is for foodies. The street has always been known as a place to meet. Lined with an array of gourmet food and culinary delights for visitors to try it is the perfect place to take a leisurely stroll, shop and chat. There will be plenty of live music to listen to and there will likely be face painting and balloon animals for children. It is also a great place to try Frankfurt’s famous Green Sauce, a creamy seven-herb sauce. Entry to the festival is free. fressgassfest.de ■



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The Kleingärten



By Kat Nickola

If you've been on any German train, you've likely zipped past towns and wondered at the groupings of little huts that seem to occupy town edges. On a slow train, you may have noticed that they are all neatly enclosed within small, fenced plots full of vegetable patches or flower beds. These are the **Kleingärten**, or urban garden allotments and on a weekend they become neighborhoods full of life, with the prominent sounds of chickens, lawn mowers and kids playing while their grandparents relax on loungers.

These small grids of backyard space are also known as *Schrebergärten*. They were developed during the industrialization of German cities in the mid-1800s by Dr. Moritz Schreber of Leipzig. The humble garden allotments were designed to help the urban poor supplement their diet while utilizing the undeveloped and undesirable spaces near train tracks and industrial zones.

Nowadays, they still provide a place for Germans to garden and enjoy a weekend escape. Since a majority of German people live in apartments, whether in a city or village, the Kleingärten often acts as an out-of-town backyard for the whole family to enjoy. ■

GERMAN WORD OF THE MONTH

Bäuerchen (noun) boy-er-chen

Literal translation: Farmer (a small, cute one)

Meaning: The burp a baby makes when patting its back after nursing or drinking a bottle; perhaps farmers also used to lack the manners to say *Schulz* (sorry).



Read all about every gardener's nemesis: Slugs in Germany

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UNIQUE GARDENS IN STUTTGART

By Katie Wells

Large, vibrant cities are exciting, but it is always nice to step into a green space that offers a reset from the hustle and bustle—a place where clean oxygen is abundant and natural beauty thrives. Stuttgart has many lush, unique gardens.

WILHELMA ZOO AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

Likely the most well-known is the **Wilhelma Zoo and Botanical Gardens**. It is the only zoological botanical garden in Germany and has over 8,500 plant species. In the mid-19th century, King Wilhelm I of Württemberg had a vision for a private Moorish-style villa and garden, which he commissioned to be built.

In 1919, it was opened to the public, and the zoological garden was established. Since then, it has become not only a wonderful place to visit, but also an important site for biodiversity and scientific research. The combined animal park and garden make for an interesting nature stroll; you might hear the caw of an exotic bird or spot a koala munching on eucalyptus. As you admire giant lily pads, you might imagine hopping in one like a boat or spy a blue heron fishing nearby. Some highlights for garden aficionados include:

- Historic Moorish garden
- Extra-large water lilies
- Butterfly house
- Rare trees like sequoias
- A notable terrarium with a crocodile shed
- A vast orchid collection
- A walk-through aviary



QINGYIN GARDEN

Another unique garden, and perhaps a hidden gem in Stuttgart, sits at the top of an old vineyard. The **Qingyin Garden**, also known as the Chinese Garden, epitomizes tranquility created through thoughtful architectural design and garden landscaping. The garden was gifted to the city in 1933 as a symbol of friendship between Jiangsu and Baden-Württemberg. It is a place of reflection and tranquility. When visitors are ready to return to city life, they can first admire a scenic view of it from the top of the hill. Some highlights of the garden include:

- Koi fish reflection pond
- Gold prize winner at the International Garden Expo Stuttgart in 1933
- Thoughtfully curated plants: evergreen trees, dwarf plants, lotus flowers and climbing vines
- Great viewing spot for the city of Stuttgart
- Traditional southern Chinese sculptures and architecture

WEIßENBURGPARK

Weißenburgpark in Stuttgart is a special spot for visitors to promenade and enjoy a warm beverage in a green space. On top of Bopser Hill, surrounded by lush greenery and a large garden terrace, is an art nouveau pavilion with the **Teehaus**, a tea house which offers high-quality teas, regional beers and a bite to eat. What better way to admire a garden and greenery than by sipping on a nourishing cup of herbal tea? From the Teehaus, you can also admire sweeping views of the city. Some special features of the park include:

- Winding walking paths
- Historic pavilion and Teehaus
- Large garden terrace
- Scenic views of the surrounding area
- Marmorsaal, a historic marble hall with water and garden-like motifs which hosts concerts and other events today. ■





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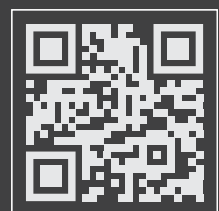
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I've been stationed in many different places, and it typically takes at least the first year to figure out what grows in my new yard and when I can plant a vegetable garden. Germany was no different, but now that I've been here for nearly five years, I feel confident that my flowers won't freeze, my tomatoes get enough sun and my pumpkins will ripen.

To save you a whole lot of time, here is my advice for seasonal tasks to care for your German yard and planting times for that little veggie patch you've always wanted.

YOUR GUIDE TO GARDENING IN GERMANY

Story and Photos by Kat Nickola

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Life is tough for a gardener in the winter. I mostly tend my indoor plants and attempt to keep my Christmas poinsettia alive all year.

- Get a compost bin and rake any leftover Fall leaves into it.
- Prune dead material from last year's plants.
- Cut to the ground any dead raspberry stalks.
- Trim hedges and shrubs. Major pruning is only permitted from Oct. 1 to Feb. 28 by German regulations that protect nesting birds and wildlife.

MARCH

Time for planning the garden. Choose seeds, wander around at the local garden center and tidy up your tools.

- Enjoy the first crocus and snowdrops, followed by daffodils and forsythia blooms.
- Dig your new garden, make expansions or shore up raised beds.
- Begin lettuces, broccoli, sweet pea, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts or cabbage seeds indoors. Planting trays are sold this time of year at grocery stores and garden centers.
- Plant summer bulbs like lilies, dahlias, iris and alliums.
- Do the first spring lawn mowing, but avoid any sprouting bulbs or wild strawberries.

APRIL

With weather alternating from sunny, warm days to downright wintery temps, April is truly a wild spring month.

- Fruit trees bloom and lilacs spread their fragrance while hyacinths and tulips emerge.
- Start summer vegetable seeds indoors early in the month or plan on buying plants at the end of the month. What does well? Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, lettuces, strawberries, cucumbers, runner beans, melons and summer squash.
- Prep your garden. Mix in any new soil, compost or manure. I've used large plastic totes (and a shovel and gloves) to pick up free horse manure from local farms by searching the online marketplace *Kleinanzeigen* for "düngen."
- Plant any lettuce or brassicas that you started indoors last month outside in your garden under a cold frame.
- Plant raspberry bushes if you'd like to start or expand your patch.
- Late in the month, if it's warm, sow seeds for root vegetables like carrot, radish or beets and plant potato and onion starters. Monitor the frost risk and be prepared to cover sprouts with a sheet if temperatures drop.



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MAY

Planting may begin in your vegetable patch! You won't see many German gardeners putting out vegetables until after the Eisheligan (Ice Saints) days of May 11–15 have passed; these are the riskiest days for a late-year frost!

- Appreciate the rhododendron blooms and watch as daisies and iris bring color. The *Pfingstrose* (peony) blooms around the *Pfingst* (Pentecost) holiday and woody herbs like rosemary and lavender will be getting bushy.
- Sow seeds for summer blooms like sunflowers, marigold, nasturtium and cosmos. Plant bedding flowers and window boxes.
- Prune forsythia and lilac.
- Pick the first lettuces from your cold frame.
- Sow autumn vegetables directly in your garden from seed: corn, pumpkins and squash.
- After May 15, place all of your indoor or purchased vegetable plants in the garden.
- Sow another round of seeds for lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and carrots.
- Participate in "No Mow May" to encourage wilder plants to diversify and bloom in your lawn. This gives beneficial insects time to establish themselves so they can pollinate your garden. If you have a large yard, consider making a small wildflower meadow.

JUNE & JULY

Over the summer, your primary task is helping the garden grow.

- Enjoy summer flowers like foxgloves in the forest, roses, black-eyed Susans and lilies.
- Strawberry and raspberry patches will start to yield fruit while your first broccoli, cauliflower, carrot and second lettuce can be harvested.
- Ensure your garden gets enough water. In a dry year, I will lay out a *Perlschlauch* (soaker hose) on a timer.
- Keep the garden mostly weed-free. I let a few dandelions and clover grow since they are beneficial for the soil.
- To help control slugs, you can buy pellets called *Schneckenkorn* which attracts and kills them, but does not harm plants, pets or insects.
- Cut back and clear out any briar vines that have started to grow in your yard. These can be tough to control, so tackle them when they are small.



Tomato and corn make for a delicious summer.

AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

All that hard work now pays off! Harvest time comes when the summer heat peaks and the kids head back to school.

- Colorful dahlias, spicy nasturtiums and bright sunflowers bloom in late summer.
- As tomatoes, peppers, corn, beans, summer squash, melons, broccoli, cauliflower, carrot and cucumbers ripen, it's the perfect time for salsa and salads.
- Plant a final lettuce crop from seed once the heat has faded.
- Harvest your late-growing strawberry or raspberry crop.
- One warm day, hose out, clean and tidy your spider-filled shed.

OCTOBER

As the veggies finish their season, there are still plenty of garden tasks to putter with.

- Winter plants such as holly get their red berries and tree leaves change color.
- Sunflowers can be cut, dried and seeds harvested.
- Harvest pumpkins and any root vegetables like beets and potatoes, plus your last lettuce crop and those Brussels sprouts will finally be ready.
- Plant any spring bulbs like daffodils, tulips, hyacinth, crocus and snowdrops for next year.
- Cut back dead stalks from summer perennials and trim any unwanted summer growth from your hedges and shrubs.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

As winter approaches, tidy the garden bed. Trim plants above the soil for compost but leave in roots to decompose over winter.

- Rake leaves for the compost bin.
- Trim out any dead raspberry canes.
- Cut back any sage, rosemary, thyme or lavender so it can get bushy next year.
- Do a final mow.
- Buy gardeners' burlap or a small plastic hothouse for overwintering outdoor potted plants.
- Plant heathers and hellebore in window boxes or fill them with evergreen boughs.
- Put out seeds for the birds.

Pumpkins will ripen in the fall.



Round, yellow summer squash are fun to grow.



Early broccoli can be planted in spring.



Corn and potatoes will be well established by June.



YOUR STRAWBERRY PATCH

If you grow nothing else, start a strawberry patch! You likely have wild berries already in your yard. Don't mow them, they make a great edible groundcover. Wild strawberries are more aromatic and less sweet than cultivated ones.

You can also dig out grass in a sunny location to plant cultivated strawberries. As long as the spot gets sun all year, the berries will overwinter and give you fruit year after year. I recommend buying a mixture of June-bearing (early), ever-bearing and late season varieties so your patch produces berries all summer.

In autumn, do nothing to the plants. They will stay bright green until the first frost and will then be dormant through the winter. In spring, when you see new growth, cut off the old dead leaves.

Your patch will expand over the years, and your biggest problem will be eating all the strawberries. ■



Land of LAVENDER



By Katie Wells

Lavender grows abundantly in Germany, from late June to early August often right in your yard. It is native to European mountainous zones and attracts many types of pollinators. Bumblebees in particular love lavender. So much so, that you can catch them sleeping on it during cool dewy mornings. There are many things lavender can be used for: calming tea, salves, syrup, sugar, candles and beauty products, just to name a few. Here are four easy things to do with your harvest each year. Just be sure to leave some flowers for the local bumblebees.

TIPS FOR HARVESTING

- Harvest early in the season when the flowers first start to bloom for a light and mild scent, and harvest towards the end of the season for a strong, bold fragrance.
- Harvest earlier in the morning when it is still cool. The oil in the flowers will be more aromatic.
- Using sharp sheers or scissors, cut the stems about two inches from the woody part of the plant. This will ensure more growth and blooms. Cutting at a 45-degree angle will also help the plant drain water and prevent diseases and mold.



LAVENDER SACHETS

The first and most simple way to use lavender is to make sachets. The end of the season before fall is the perfect time to harvest lavender for this, as it is at its most fragrant. You can use these in clothes drawers or hang them in your car.

1. Dry out your lavender. Harvest, then tie up to 50 stems of lavender together with twine or a rubber band. Hang it upside down in a dry, cool place away from the sun. This helps retain fragrance.
2. Once the buds feel dry and crisp to the touch (anywhere from a few days to a couple of weeks) you can shed the flowers from the stem to fill your sachet bags.

These last about six months. If you want to spread your lavender out further, fill the sachets halfway with rice. Massaging the buds with your fingers can activate the oils in the flowers and helps create a stronger smell.



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LAVENDER SUGAR RECIPE

Another easy use is to infuse sugar with lavender. The flowers are edible and, mixed with sugar, they look beautiful on top of muffins, scones and tea cookies.

1 tablespoon dried lavender

2 cups granulated sugar

1. In a food processor add the dried lavender and blend it for 10-15 seconds.
2. Add in one cup of the granulated sugar and blend with the lavender for 20 seconds. This infuses the sugar with the lavender oil.
3. In a separate bowl, gently whisk or mix the rest of the sugar into the mixture.
4. Pour into a mason jar or smaller glass bottles for gifts.

Tip: Save a few un-chopped lavender buds and mix them into the sugar at the end for a prettier infusion. Or sprinkle the top with larger pieces of the lavender as a flowery garnish.

SIMPLE LAVENDER SYRUP

This syrup is sweet, aromatic and has floral-tasting notes that can elevate lattes, tea, cocktails and lemonade. It is especially nice for winding down in the evenings since lavender has calming properties.

2 tablespoons dried lavender

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup water

** For a sweeter syrup add 1-2 tablespoons of honey*

1. In a small saucepan stir all ingredients on medium-low heat until well combined and the sugar is completely dissolved, 2-5 minutes.
2. Turn the heat to the lowest setting, cover the pot with a lid, and let the syrup sit for 10-15 minutes.
3. Let the syrup cool, then strain the syrup with a mesh strainer into an airtight jar or bottle.

Tip: To make the syrup purple, add a few drops of violet food coloring.

Storing: Keep the syrup in an airtight jar or bottle in the refrigerator for 2-4 weeks.

LAVENDER SALT SCRUB

A simple addition to a self-care day is a salt scrub. It is so easy to make, great for exfoliation and the lavender creates the bonus of aroma therapy.

1 cup Epsom salt

3 tablespoons dried lavender

1/4 cup coconut oil, or jojoba oil, or olive oil

1. Chop or blend dried lavender in a food processor.
2. Stir all ingredients together until oil and lavender are evenly mixed into the salt. It should be a light and fluffy mixture.
3. Transfer to a jar with a sealable lid. ■



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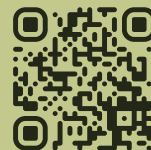
Photo by Josiah Jenkins



There is no better way to get up close and personal with ruins and archeological sites than from the ground. But have you ever wondered what they look like from above? Photographer Josiah Jenkins captured this stunning bird's-eye view of the remains of **The Great Basilica in Butrint National Park, Vlorë, Albania**. The Basilica is part of the ancient archeological site of Butrint, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

As Jenkins states, it is one of the, "most important archaeological sites in Albania. [It] contains remnants from [the] Iron Age until [the] Middle Ages." ■

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