

March Gardening Tips

With spring just around the corner, it is time to get serious and get the garden ready! The fickle weather of March makes it impossible to set dates and schedules for planting, so proceed with caution!

Shrubs and trees

- You can prune summer flowering shrubs like Crepe Myrtle after the last extremely cold weather but before they leaf out significantly.
- Early March is still a good time to transplant shrubs, trees, and hardy vines.
- Fertilize shrubs and trees if this wasn't done in February. Use an acid type fertilizer to feed evergreens, conifers, broad leaf evergreens, rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. Use an all-purpose fertilizer to feed roses and other deciduous trees and shrubs. If you use granular type fertilizers, be sure to water it in thoroughly.
- Roses can be pruned this month. Severe pruning results in long stemmed flowers and more compact bushes. Begin to spray roses for blackspot.
- Prune winter Jasmine after flowering.
- Cut trumpet creeper vine back now in that it flowers on new growth and pruning will promote better flowering.

Perennials, annuals, and bulbs

- Wait to prune any semi-woody perennials like *Salvia greggii*, *Lavender*, *Sage*, *Artemisia*, and *Careopteris* until the end of the month due to the sudden changes in temperature we still can experience.
- If you are growing your summer annuals, early March is when many summer blooming annuals should be sown indoors. Follow catalog or seed package directions.
- Seeds which were started indoors last month will most likely be ready to be transplanted into their finishing containers and given dilute fertilizer.
- If you have a greenhouse, it is time to take cuttings of 'wintered over' plants such as *Coleus*, *Chrysanthemums*, *Geraniums*, and other perennials.
- Winter's alternating thawing and freezing temperatures can heave plants right out of the ground. If you notice any plants that have heaved, lightly tamp them back into the ground with your foot.
- Divide and transplant clumping perennials such as daylily and hosta and fertilize established ones as soon as new growth appears. Transplant any free seeding perennials such as hellebore or coreopsis as they appear.
- Cut-back ornamental grasses to just above their growing crown. Divide any thick and overgrown clumps and fertilize established grasses as soon as new growth appears.

- Plant tender bulbs and tubers (gladiola, lilies and dahlias). You may continue planting additional bulbs every two weeks until mid June to ensure a continuous source of bloom.
- Set your mower on it highest height and mow your ivy, vinca, and monkey grass ground covers to easily remove old foliage.
- Fertilize any pansies, violas, and snapdragons which you planted in the fall to boost their spring blooming.

Fruits and veggies

- Finish pruning fruit trees this month - before the buds swell.
- You can still do dormant spraying of fruit trees - before the buds swell. Spraying should be done on a still day with the temperature above 40 degrees F.
- Remove straw mulch from strawberries at the first sign of growth.
- You can still plant strawberries, blueberries, currants, loganberries, boysenberries, grapes and fruit trees.
- Fertilize rhubarb.
- Take a little time to prepare the vegetable garden soil for planting. The addition of well-rotted manure, processed manure, peat moss, or compost is good additives for building compost humus in the soil.
- For early March, it's not too late to plant peas as well as perennial vegetables like asparagus, rhubarb, horseradish and artichokes.

- Be sure to get these cool-season annual veggies in this month and the sooner the better! Spinach, head and leaf lettuce, collards, turnip greens, onions, beets, broccoli, cabbage, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, carrots, egg plant, early potatoes, radish and Swiss chard can be direct seeded or transplanted into the garden.
- Aphids and caterpillars can be especially bad on early crops so watch and treat as they appear.

Lawn care

- Repair damaged areas of the lawn and over-seed. Be sure to not apply any pre-emergent herbicides to newly seeded areas.
- De-thatch, rake or aerate your lawn. Apply dolomite lime if a soil test indicates it's needed. Most lawns will need a spring feeding but if thatching or liming needs to be done, do those jobs first.
- Now through April is an ideal time to apply a combination of slow-release fertilizer and pre-emergent herbicide for crabgrass control to your lawn. You want to apply this combination before dandelions reach the puff-ball stage. The fertilizer will boost the growth of your lawn and have it looking great for spring and the herbicide will prevent crabgrass. Numerous brands are on the market and which ever you select, be sure to follow label directions.

House Plants

- House plants will react to longer days and brighter light at this time by putting out new growth. March is a good time to pinch them back to generate new growth and to thicken their growth. You can then begin fertilizing again with a dilute solution of soluble house plant food.
- Remain vigilante in watching for insects and pests. It is much easier to win a 'bug war' if you are aware of the infestation in its early stages.

Odds and Ends

- March is a good time to note areas of poor drainage in your landscape. If there are pools of water in your yard that do not drain, fill in the low spot or scoop out a channel for the water to drain away.
- Clean out all of your birdhouses now, so that they will be ready when the birds return.