

March Gardening

Each year is different, let the weather be your guide. Use this gardening guide as a simple reminder as to what needs to be done in your garden this month.

Ave High **51° F**
Ave Low **29° F**
Ave Moisture **1.72"**

√ March brings with it a sense of change, a feeling among all that there is light at the end of the tunnel. While there will still be plenty of cold days and nights ahead, and undoubtedly some more snow before it is all finished, we can sense that spring is just around the corner.



√ While most of us might hardly notice the passage of Fall into Winter, we will all notice the first day of spring this month. Be it balmy or blustery, the first day of spring marks a mental turning point: Warmer days are ahead.

√ March is the month when many of the beautiful spring perennials begin to flower. Crocus, Aubrietia, Creeping Phlox, Candytuft, Rock Cress, Bergenia, Snowdrops, Witch-hazel and many others will be brightening your days. With Spring just around the corner, it is time to get serious and get the garden ready!

√ The weather of March makes it impossible to set dates and schedules for planting, so proceed with caution!

Trees & Shrubs

√ Apply dormant oil to fruit trees, magnolias, crabapples and other shrubs, such as roses, raspberries, euonymus and junipers. Dormant oil controls aphids, scale insects, spidermites, and many other overwintering pests. Spray when the buds are swelling, but when the flowers or leaves haven't opened. Apply when temperature is above 40 degrees F.

√ Dormant Oil is an organic way of eliminating many of the unwanted pests that live on the plant, lay eggs on the plant, or hibernate on the plant through the winter. It does not control insects that lay their eggs in the soil, such as codling moth or cherry fruit fly. The closer you wait until the plant begins to grow, the better your insect control will be.

√ March and early April is a good time to transplant shrubs and trees. As soon as the soil is workable, but before buds have swollen or broken open, you can move shrubs and trees.

√ Fertilize fruit trees 6 to 8 weeks before they start to grow. Fertilize other trees and shrubs early in the spring to stimulate strong new growth. Do not fertilize mature shade trees or pine trees unless they are under stress.

√ Use an acid type rhododendron fertilizer to feed evergreens, conifers, broad leaf evergreens, rhododendrons,

azaleas and Japanese Maples. Use an all-purpose fertilizer to feed deciduous trees and shrubs.

√ Finish pruning fruit trees this month - before the buds swell - or wait until after they completely finish blooming. don't try to prune trees while they are blooming.

√ Spray a fungicide on peach, nectarine, apricot, plum and cherry trees just before they start to bloom to control coryneum blight. Flowering peach, cherry and flowering plum may also need this protection. A follow-up fungicide may be needed during May and June if this disease was a major problem last year.

√ Finish 'dormant pruning' shrubs and trees in your yard. Continue 'summer trimming' and shaping shrubs and trees all summer as needed.

Roses

√ Remove winter protection of mounded earth and mulch from roses. Uncover tree roses, climbing roses and miniature roses.

√ Roses can be pruned late-March, however they can be pruned in April if there is still a chance of extremely cold temperatures. Severe spring pruning results in nicer, long stemmed flowers, and more compact bushes.

√ Climbing roses should be thinned out to get rid of the old tangled growth. Shrub roses and English Garden roses should be pruned to control their size and shape. Groundcover roses do not need much pruning, just keep them the size you need them.

√ Feed roses after you prune them. A fertilizer mixed with an insecticide is a good way to help prevent insect problems. Apply Epsom's Salts (magnesium sulphate) twice each year to promote healthier plants.

√ Begin to spray roses for blackspot, spidermites and aphids. Roses benefit from an application of Dormant Oil, just before they start to grow.

Flowers

√ There is often a strong temptation to start removing winter mulches from your flower beds. Remove the mulch gradually as the plants show signs of new growth. The purpose of winter mulch is to act as a protector from sudden changes of temperature and chilling winds, so keep in mind that it is still winter. Acclimatize your plants by removing the mulch over a period of days, allowing the light and air to



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reach the new growth slowly. It is much better to remove the mulch a little later than to remove it too early.

√ Sow seeds of summer blooming annuals indoors about 6 to 8 weeks before you want to plant them outside. The earlier you plant them, the larger the plants will be when you transplant them outside - watch the temperatures carefully.

√ Plant marigolds, asters, zinnias, cleome, salvia, lobelia, alyssum, verbena, and portulaca 6 to 8 weeks before you plant them outside.

√ Seeds which were started indoors last month may need to be transplanted from the flats into peat pots or larger containers.

√ Alternating thawing and freezing can tear plant roots and even force the plant right out of it's hole. If you notice any plants that have heaved, push them back into the earth, and tamp lightly with your foot.

√ Plant pansies, primroses, and perennial flowers outside as soon as the ground is dry. Plant them in containers now for early, colorful flowers on your porch or balcony.

√ Most perennials may be divided and moved up until they begin to show new growth.

√ Plant tender bulbs and tubers (gladiola, lilies and dahlias) inside to get a jump on spring. Plant them outside as soon as the temperature cooperates.

√ You may continue planting additional gladiola bulbs every two weeks until mid June to ensure a continuous source of bloom.

√ Clean up your perennial flower gardens. Cut back the previous season's dead plant material. Clean up old perennial foliage from last season (trimmings can go into the compost pile).

√ Cut back ornamental grasses.

√ Resist the urge to start digging in your flower beds too early. You can damage the soil's structure. If you pick up a handful of soil, it should fall apart, not stick together like glue. When it's dry enough, you can start to dig beds and add compost or manure in preparation for planting.

Vegetables

√ Take a little time to prepare the vegetable garden soil for planting. The addition of Bumper Crop, Black Forest Compost, Fertimulch, well-rotted manure, or home made compost are good additives for building compost humus in the soil. Mix it into the soil as soon as the ground is dry.

√ Peas and sweet peas may be planted right now as well as perennial vegetables like Asparagus, Rhubarb, and Horseradish.

√ Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, celery, leeks, onions, early potatoes, and radish seeds may be planted in the garden about mid month.

√ Spinach, Swiss Chard, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Brussel Sprouts, Parsley, and other hardy vegetables can be seeded or set out late-March.

√ Cut potatoes into pieces, dust them with Bonide Garden Dust, and let them sit for at least 24 hours before planting. Potatoes can rot easily when planted in cold and wet soil.

√ Start planting earth boxes, grow boxes, or raised bed gardens.

√ Plant Strawberries, Blueberries, Currants, Blackberries, Boysenberries, Grapes and Fruit Trees.

√ Add some steer manure around your Rhubarb.

√ Late-March is the time to start tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, lettuce, and many other vegetable seeds inside the house. Wait another 2 or 3 weeks to start pumpkins, cucumbers, and squash.

Houseplants

√ House plants will react to longer days and brighter light at this time by putting out new growth. The end of this month is a good time to pinch them back to generate new growth and to thicken them. You can then begin fertilizing again with house plant food. Turn your houseplants a quarter turn each week to make sure all sides of the plant receive adequate light, and to keep the shape of the plant balanced. Mist or spray your houseplants to clean away the winters dust, prevent Spider Mites and add a little humidity. 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 it's early stages.

√ **Amaryllis** - Fertilize your amaryllis once a month until the weather permits you to plant it outside for the summer. Keep the leaves upright, do not let them bend over.

√ **Bonsai** - Deciduous Bonsai plants will begin to bud and to produce new leaves. Keep new shoots to the size and shape your plant requires. Use 1.0mm wire to help direct and shape the new growth.

√ **Lucky Bamboo** - Fertilize this month with 'Green Green' and change the water.

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✓ **Poinsettias** - Make sure to keep your plants moist, but not soggy wet. Plant them outside as soon as the weather is warm enough.

✓ **Hydrangeas** - Do not let your hydrangea dry out while it is blooming. Dry roots make flowers fade prematurely. Most hydrangeas grown for flowers are not hardy in our area, so don't be too disappointed if your plant does not survive the winter outside.

✓ **Azaleas** - Keep azaleas slightly moist at all times. Fertilize them monthly. After blooming, trim them back about 1/3 and plant them outside when the weather will not freeze. Most azaleas grown for flowers are not hardy, so don't be too disappointed if your plant does not survive the winter outside.

✓ **Mums** - Most chrysanthemums you receive as houseplants are 'Florist Mums'. They may not be hardy, and they may not bloom again, no matter how hard you try to take care of them. Florist mums have very special requirements to make them grow and bloom.

Miscellaneous

✓ The most dreaded tasks of all is weeding, but it is one that really needs to be accomplished before the weeds have a chance to flower and go to seed. Remember once the weeds go to seed, you may be fighting that weed seed for up to seven years or more. Most weeds can simply be pulled or cultivated out of the garden while they are young.

✓ Turn the compost pile, adding any mulch which was removed from the garden to it.

✓ Test your soil for pH to see if any amendments are necessary. A general rule of thumb is to add 4 lbs. of lime per 100 sq. ft. of garden for every pH point below 6.5, or 1 lb. of sulfur per 100 sq. ft. for every pH point above 7.5. The best way to adjust pH is gradually, over several seasons.

✓ Sawdust, composted oak leaves, wood chips, peat moss, cottonseed meal, and leaf mold lower the pH.

✓ Ashes of hardwoods, bone meal, crushed marble, and crushed oyster shells raise the pH.

✓ March is a good time to note areas of poor drainage. 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.

✓ Repair any fencing, arbors, or trellis work that is weak or has broken over the winter ... before you get too busy.

✓ Check the plants under the eaves of the house and under tall evergreens to see that they have sufficient moisture.

Lawn

✓ Start winter cleanup of the lawn when the grass is no longer sopping wet. Rake your lawn to get rid of dead growth, stray leaves, twigs and winter debris and let light and air to the soil level, encouraging the grass to grow.

✓ If snowmold is a problem, leaf rake the area. Fluffing the area will kill Snowmold spores and then the lawn will be able to start to recover, you may need to reseed the area. Chemical controls are ineffective in the spring. If snowmold is a recurring problem, apply a fungicide to the lawn just before the first snowstorm in the fall to help prevent it. Removing snow from the area will help to stop snowmold from developing.

✓ Repair damaged areas of the lawn.... Dethatch, rake or aerate. Most lawns will need a spring feeding but if thatching or aerating needs to be done, do those jobs first. Over-seeding can be done as the last step, after the lawn has been fertilized.

✓ Fertilize your lawn, after your winter cleanup, with either 21-7-7 lawn fertilizer or Dr. Earth organic lawn food. Do not apply crabgrass control yet, wait until mid-April.

Wild Bird

✓ Clean out all of your birdhouses now, so that they will be ready when the birds return. You can attract different kinds of birds by the type of food you offer.

✓ **Q. Will birds' feet stick to metal perches in the winter?**

A. No. Birds have no sweat glands in their feet, so there is no moisture to freeze onto the metal surface.

✓ **Q. Why aren't birds eating?**

A. Replace the seed and clean the feeder. The high oil content in many seeds and mixes can become rancid. Do not feed old, wet, or moldy seeds.

Check your seed mixture. It may be the wrong mix for the birds you want to attract.

Make sure the feeder's holes are open and not plugged.