

Parker County Master Gardener Association

Garden Tips - March

Special Note:

Garden this month with the average last killing frost date for our area in mind. Our last average killing frost date is March 16th. Killing frosts can and do occur after this date but it is a good indication.

General yard:

Repot overgrown houseplants as warm weather returns.

Lanky tropical plants and other houseplants can be pruned to reshape them. This goes both for the ones you will be taking outside and the ones you will leave in your home.

Fertilize new annual flowers and vegetables also groundcovers and container garden plants with a complete and balanced, water-soluble fertilizer for rapid establishment.

You can use the same ratio fertilizer on shade trees, evergreens, groundcovers, summer-flowering shrubs and vines. The same ratio fertilizer can also be used every 3-4 weeks for established annual and perennial flowers, also on vegetables.

Aphids ("plant lice") accumulate on tender new growth. Most are small, with pear-shaped bodies. Often a steady spray of water can remove them, natural predators can also be of benefit. If these do not seem to be working, most general-purpose insecticides will control them.

Snails, slugs and pill bugs can be a problem. Several methods can help remove many of them: a bowl of dog food with water added or a flat container of beer can be left out overnight then removed the next morning with the dead snails, slugs and pill bugs. There are also baits and contact products that can be purchased to use.

Lawn:

If you did not "scalp" your lawn late in February, you can do so now. This will remove browned blades; expose new growth to the sun and remove many of the weeds. Set the mower one or two notches lower when you scalp your lawn. Be sure to raise it back up. Collect clippings and use in compost.

If you are having a problem with clover, chickweed, dandelions, henbit and other broad-leaved weeds, apply a broad-leaved weed killer. This can be done in any type of turf (look for a product with 2 4 D). When you have established a thick and lush lawn, many of these weeds will not be a problem.

If you are planning on using a pre-emergent to prevent crabgrass or grass burs, you must do it early in the month and then repeat it 90 days later. But first, know that thick, lush lawns can usually crowd out many weeds.

If you have fescue grass, fertilize it early in the month with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer.

If you have St. Augustine grass or Bermuda grass, fertilize it late in the month with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer.

Flowers:

Remove spent flowers from spring bulbs, but leave foliage in place until it dries so that the bulbs can store food reserves for the next season.

Start hanging baskets of petunias, ferns and others for another dimension in landscape color.

Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.

There is still time to plant seeds of your favorite annuals in flats to be transplanted out-of-doors when danger of frost is past. Hurry!

Plant warm-season annual flowers and vegetables late in the month. Remember the last frost date and do not plant too early.

Annual flowers and vegetables in container gardens can be planted several weeks earlier than garden beds, since you can move and protect the plants from late freezes.

Dig and divide summer and fall-flowering perennials very early in month, before new growth begins. Cannas, coneflowers, fall asters, mallows, mums, perennial salvias and Shasta daisies are good examples.

Select and order caladium tubers as well as coleus and geranium plants for late April and early May planting. Do not plant caladiums until soil temperature reaches 70-degrees F.

As azalea and camellia plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed area. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.

Fruit & Nut:

Always go by the Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule, available from your county Texas AgriLife Extension Service Office. Use only approved insecticide and fungicide products and follow label directions.

Fertilize pecans with high-nitrogen fertilizer early in the month. Repeat after 30 and 60 days.

Vegetables:

Apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* ("B.t.") as needed to eliminate cabbage loopers on cole crops; also canker worms that are stripping foliage from shade trees.

Trees & Shrubs:

Select and plant spring-flowering shrubs, trees and vines. Now is a good time to make your selections, while they are in full bloom in the garden centers.

When planting balled-and-burlapped and bare-rooted trees and shrubs, shape and remove some of the top growth (as much as 30% to 50% to compensate for roots lost in digging). Beware of closeout sales on bare-root trees and shrubs. Your best bet, at this time of the year, is to depend on container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants for landscape use.

Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March. Prune spring-flowering trees, shrubs and vines as soon as they finish blooming.

Slow the spread of fire blight in apples, pears, photinias, pyracanthas and other members of the rose family with agricultural streptomycin applied during bloom.

If you have photinias, watch for small maroon speckles on leaves of plants, followed by yellowing and death of entire limbs. When you first see the maroon speckles, apply approved fungicide to lessen the spread of fungal leaf spot to new foliage. You may choose to replace them with better plants such as Nellie R. Stevens Hollies.

Roses:

Protect roses against black spot and mildew with appropriate fungicide applied weekly.

Fertilize roses with specialty rose fertilizer, monthly or at least every six weeks now until September.