

MARCH

While you are still waiting for the weather to warm up, repot any crowded houseplants. You might also cut back some plants, like Philodendron and Ferns. They will be ready for a spring growth spurt as light and warmth increase.

Lawns

- Check your lawn for weeds and identify them for proper chemical control. Herbicides used on the lawn to control weeds, whether pre-emergent or post emergent, should be selected for and timed to the particular weed. They can be ineffective or even fatal to grass if not used properly.
- The application of fertilizers should be governed by the particular kind of warm season grass you are growing. Obtain a NC State Lawn Maintenance Calendar from the County Extension Service that describes how to care for whichever grass you have, be it Bermuda, Centipede, St. Augustine, or Zoysia or visit www.turffiles.ncsu.edu to download the NC State Lawn Maintenance Calendar.
- Apply pre-emergent herbicide for Crabgrass control before soil temperatures reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Applying iron to turf grass will green it up quickly without the application of nitrogen. If you have any over-spray on your concrete, remove it immediately. It will stain.
- Remember, Centipede grass does not tolerate early nitrogen applications.
- If you have not taken a soil test, do it at the end of March. The test is free from April – November. Soil test results will tell you what soil amendments you need for a beautiful, healthy lawn and garden.

Trees and Shrubs

- Trim overgrown hedges.

- Prune dead wood and winter damaged branches from trees and shrubs.
- Prune most shade trees except for Birch and Maple trees. Also prune berry producing plants such as Holly, Nandina, and Pyracantha.
- Do NOT trim Azaleas, Forsythia, and Quince and Spirea, Lorapetulum and other spring blooming plants until after they have bloomed.
- Prune summer flowering trees and shrubs such as Butterfly Bush, Crape Myrtle, Hibiscus, Lantana, and Rose-of-Sharon which bloom on the coming year's new growth.
- Heavy pruning of overgrown evergreen shrubs such as Cleyera, Euonymus, Hollies and Pittosporium, can be done this month, but do not remove all the leaf area. These plants will be quickly restored when spring growth starts. The late winter and early spring months are the best times of the year to make aggressive cuts or cuts meant to rejuvenate.
- Clean up the last of fallen leaves and compost.

Flowers

- Start seeds of tender annuals, such as Impatiens, Petunias, Vinca and Zinnias, but keep them indoors until the nights have warmed and danger of frost has passed.
- Divide and transplant perennials such as Helianthus, Asters, Astibles, Bleeding Heart, Black-eyed Susan, Chrysanthemums, Coral Bells, Daylilies, Daisies, Hostas, Oxalis and Phlox. Replant in prepared beds that have rich well-drained soil.
- Perennials, biennials and hardy annuals such as Candytuft, Dianthus, Foxglove, Larkspur, Pinks, Snapdragons, Stock, Sweet Peas, Sweet William, and Violas, can be planted outdoors after the danger of heavy freezes (below 28-32 degrees for many hours) has passed.
- Plant cool season herbs such as Cilantro and Dill.

- Pinch back Pansies to rejuvenate blooms.
- Clip last year's Liriope leaves or blades to within a couple of inches of the ground, before any new growth appears. A mower set at high level, or a deftly handled weed whacker will accomplish this.
- Chrysanthemums can be lifted and divided and will benefit by being replanted in a different spot. If you have over-wintered pots of Begonia, Coleus, and Impatiens, take cuttings and root new plants.
- Cut back tropical plants such as Allamanda, Hibiscus, and Ixora, that you have stored indoors for the winter. They will be growing well when it is time to put them outdoors again.
- Fertilize herbaceous flowering plants by applying 15-15-15 to new and emerging plants. After six to eight weeks, switch to 5-10-15 which is a good flower fertilizer, and continue that interval for the rest of the season.
- Deadhead or remove Camellia blooms when they begin to fade. Clean up and compost the debris, except for the spent Camellia blooms, which need to be trashed because they may contain diseases that could contaminate the compost pile.
- Apply a fresh layer of mulch to flower beds.

Roses

- Container grown Roses can be planted now, as well as bare root plants.
- Finish pruning Roses in early March. Make sure to prune any dead or damaged canes at least one inch below dead area.
- For repeat-blooming Roses, prune by one-third. Thin older canes on climbing Roses, leaving newer ones for more blooms.

- Remove and discard old mulch at the base of any over-wintered rose plants. Replace with clean mulch, but do not pile up against the crown or lower canes as this can cause insect and disease problems.
- Begin a complete Rose spray program as soon as new leaves appear. Apply 8-8-8 fertilizer in March, May and July.

Vegetables

- Even though they are often for sale, do not be tempted to set out warm weather vegetable seedlings still in pots, unless you are willing to bring them indoors at night.
- You can still start seedlings of tender vegetables such as Eggplants, Peppers and Tomatoes, and tender annual herbs, such as Basil and Coriander indoors.
- Put an empty toilet paper roll around new plants to collar and control Cutworms.
- After danger of hard frost is passed, set out transplants of cool-season vegetables such as Broccoli, Cabbage, Collards, English Peas, Kale and Onion sets.
- Continue sowing Radishes and greens such as Arugula and Lettuce.
- Start Cucumbers, Melons, Squash and Zucchini indoors to set out in mid-April.
- Fertilize Asparagus early in March before the spear begins to emerge. If you have not already done so, add a layer of compost.
- Plant herbs such as Chives, Mint, Oregano, and Thyme, so they can get a fast start for the season until danger of frost has passed, before planting Basil, Dill, and Fennel. Because Mint is invasive you may want to plant it in a pot.
- Turn over beds in the vegetable garden one more time. Incorporate well rotten manure.

- Start a garden journal. Note weather, flowers in bloom, chores completed, and plants you added to your garden.

Fruit Trees

- Start and maintain a spray schedule for fruit trees. Spray Apple, Pear, and Quince with Agri-mycin (Streptomycin) to control fire blight.
- There is still time to finish pruning fruit trees.
- Plant new fruit trees and keep well watered.
- Plant a Fig tree. They prefer full sun.
- Most young trees do not need fertilizing until they have been in the ground for at least one year.

Fruits and Berries

- Plant fruit such as Blueberries and Grapes. For more information on Blueberries visit www.blueberries.ces.ncsu.edu and go to growing Blueberries-NCSU, Growing Blueberries in the Home Garden.
- March is an ideal time to plant and Strawberries.

Integrated Pest Management, IPM (bugs and insects)

- Voles may be active now, so look for suddenly shriveled plants chewed off at the roots.
- Slugs and Snails may attack newly emerging perennials, especially Hosta. Slug baits work well. Another option is pouring beer in a pan. The slugs are drawn to the beer and then drown in it.
- Watch for Aphids, Cutworms and Thrips, on new plants and foliage.
- Camellias are vulnerable to Tea Scale. Spray with horticultural oil.
- Watch for Leaf Miners on Hollies and Spider Mites on Junipers.

- Do not kill Butterfly, their larvae, Bees or other pollinators by indiscriminately using pesticides. Target a specific pest, read the product labels, and spray after sundown.
- Clean out last year's pesticides, herbicides and any other toxic substances. Deliver them to hazardous disposal units or waste centers. Once a year, the Extension Office holds publicized dates for the collection and disposal of hazardous garden products and empty containers.