

March Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

There are no groundhogs here so we needn't worry about the prediction for six more weeks of winter. In fact, winter will soon be a distant memory as March announces spring's entrance for us. Except for a couple of cold nights in the 30s, ours has been a mild winter. However, those cold nights did leave winter's signature - less cold-tolerant plants such as perennial peanut, plumbago and porterweed are leafless or covered with bronzed leaves. At first glance, these plants appear dead, however, upon closer inspection leaf buds are breaking open and new growth is emerging. This new growth provides the guidance needed to know where to prune off dead wood. Some groundcovers such as perennial peanut will benefit from a mowing to remove winter's straggly growth.

Mail-order catalogs are very tempting with their profusely blooming plants with impeccable beauty. One might erroneously consider trying tulips and other bulbs meant for zones 7 and lower. But don't despair because there is an abundance of bulbs and bulbous-like plants to give you joy in your Florida garden. Unlike the amaryllis sold in pots during the holidays, those growing in your landscape are now ready to bloom giving you a bountiful display. Others blooming this month are blood lilies, cannas, crinum lilies, daylilies, and walking iris.

Gardening activities:

- Plants coming out of dormancy need fertilizer to get off to a healthy start so this is the time to fertilize all landscape plants and lawns. Always use a complete fertilizer, one that contains the three major components (Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium) and a list of minor nutrients such as magnesium, iron, and manganese. An analysis of 8-2-8, 12-2-14, 15-0-15 or similar is recommended. Nitrogen and potassium should have at least 30 percent in a slow-release form. Apply a maximum of one pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. To determine the correct amount of fertilizer to use, divide the first number on the bag (nitrogen) into 100; this determines the number of pounds in this bag needed to supply one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn and landscape area.
- If you aren't sure how much phosphorous is present in your soil, you can have a soil test done at the Extension Office for a nominal fee.
- Fertilize fruit trees and palms if you didn't do it in February. Use fertilizer that is labeled for fruit trees and palms accordingly.
- Inspect the tender new growth on plants as this is a favorite site for sucking insects such as aphids, mealybugs and scales. Choose a least toxic control method such as horticultural soap or oil spray if insects are present in threatening numbers. Even a strong burst of water will knock many pests off your plants.
- Never spray your fruit trees while in bloom.
- As new fruit is setting on your fruit trees and when we are in a drought, remember to give them a thorough watering every two to three weeks.
- If your shrubs needing pruning, remove no more than 1/3 of the total mass to maintain a healthy plant.

- Prune spring-blooming plants only after they finish blooming.
- Mulch to conserve moisture around your plants, but leave a few inches of air space at the base of the plants.

Upcoming educational classes:

- “Palms in the Landscape” at Shamrock Park, March 7 at 2:00 pm. Call 486-2706 or 861-9900 to register.
- “Living Spring Baskets” at Twin Lakes Park, March 8 at 10:00 am. Call 861-9900.
- “Ants, Ants, Ants” at Shamrock Park, March 21 at 2:00 pm. Call 486-2706 or 861-9900.

Planting guide:

Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beans, beets, borage, cantaloupe, chervil, comfrey, corn, cucumber, cumin, horehound, kohlrabi, lemon balm, lettuce, marjoram, mustard, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, radish, summer squash, tarragon, thyme, tomatoes, and watermelon.

Annuals: Ageratum, alyssum, Begonia, browallia, Celosia, coleus, Cosmos, Dahlberg daisy, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, marigold, Nicotiana, ornamental pepper, Petunia, Phlox, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Verbena, and Zinnia.

Perennials: African iris, Amazon lily, blood lily, blue daze, Caladium, Canna, Coreopsis, Crinum lily, daylily, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, Gaura, gladiolus, gloriosa lily, Mexican heather, milkweed, Pentas, rain lily, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Shasta daisy, society garlic, spider lily, and walking Iris.

Fruits in Season: Banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), jaboticaba, kumquat, loquat, strawberry, and papaya.

Blooming plants: Angel’s trumpet, bird of paradise, blue flag iris, blue sage, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, Buddleia, cape honeysuckle, Carolina Jessamine, dwarf Indian hawthorn, flame vine, fuchsia skullcap, geranium, lantana, mahoe, Mexican flame vine, orchid tree, Rhododendron, silk floss tree, society garlic, Surinam cherry, Walter’s Viburnum and wildflowers.

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75. The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-Noon and 1:00-4:00 pm (941-861-9807). Our satellite help desk at Selby Library is open Wednesdays from 9:30 am-Noon.