

Gardening Tips for March

According to Better Homes & Gardens, The landscape is awakening this month. Plan to spend time in the yard weekly to stay on top of tasks that need attention. March is a bridge month in the garden. Some activities must be completed before month's end; others are just revving up. Here's help prioritizing your spring chores

Do It Now

- Sow sugar snap peas before the necessary cool weather disappears. Remember to provide support for vines.
- In upper regions of the South, you can still apply a dormant spray to fruit trees until about midmonth. After that point, dilute the solution concentration by half if you spray. Follow label directions carefully.
- Divide clump-forming, spring-blooming shrubs before flowers or leaves appear. Candidates include Japanese kerria, forsythia, and winter honeysuckle. Cut plants back to about 4 inches before digging clumps.
- Finish pruning evergreens early in the month. Cut to shape and control plant size.

Prepare for Upcoming Chores

- Azaleas make the biggest impact when grouped by color. Mark flower colors as azaleas come into bloom. Dig and shift shrubs during or after bloom time.
- Wait to prune spring-blooming shrubs and trees until after flowering.
- Finish pruning summer-flowering plants that form blooms on new growth, like butterfly bush or rose of Sharon.

- Let self-sowing plants set and drop seed. This includes bachelor's button, calendula, larkspur, and forget-me-not.

Test Garden Tip: Fill bird feeders and clean birdhouses to offer room and board to returning migratory species. Feeders can stage a fascinating show as birds wing their way north to summer breeding grounds.

Color Your World

Deal with blooming plants now to ensure a season-long parade of cheery blossoms.

Wake Up Roses

Clean up rose beds, removing any fallen leaves from last season. Refresh mulch around roses. Feed plants with a slow-release rose fertilizer. As new leaves emerge, start weekly sprays for black spot. Double-check irrigation systems to ensure all is working fine.

Plan for Color

- Shop now for summer- and fall-flowering perennials. Eye-catching bloomers include purple coneflower, coreopsis, and hardy hibiscus for summer color. Try Mexican bush sage (a tender perennial in much of the South), autumn sedums, and asters for fall blooms.
- Daylilies start flowering this month. To ensure you get the exact color you want, visit nurseries and purchase plants in bloom.
- Tuck tender bulbs, such as dahlias, tuberous begonias, and gladiolas, into the garden this month. If you can't get enough

glads, plant some weekly until mid-June to ensure a season-long show.

Test Garden Tip: Pinch growing tips of sweet peas and garden mums when seedlings reach 4 inches high. This pinch increase branching, which ultimately increases flower number.

Grow Your Own Edibles

Save money by growing your own food. It may be easier than you think to grow fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs. And now's a great time to start.

Plant cool-season varieties, such as radishes, peas, lettuce, broccoli, and cauliflower as soon as you can work the ground -- they'll survive frosty weather.

Wait to plant warm-season annuals such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, okra, sweet potatoes, and watermelons, after all danger of frost has passed and the soil has warmed to about 60 degrees F (a temperature in which you can comfortably walk on soil in bare feet).

Here's a hint: If you started any vegetables indoors to get a head start on the season, harden them off by slowly acclimating them to the outdoors, before planting them.

Salad crops: Direct-sow leaf lettuce and spinach as soon as soil is ready and workable. Make weekly plantings this month and next to ensure a long harvest season.

Warm-season crops: In all but the coldest parts of the South, direct-sow seeds of beans, cucumber, okra, melons, and squash. In the same

areas, set out transplants of eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes. Keep frost protection handy, and use it as needed. Wait until next month to plant these crops in the northern reaches of the region.

Perennial vegetables: Plant roots of perennial veggies, such as rhubarb, asparagus, and horseradish.

Berries: March is a great time to plant berry crops. This list includes strawberries, blueberries, boysenberries, currants, and grapes.

Citrus: In the warmest part of the South, plant citrus trees this month. Fertilize established trees with a citrus-specific product. Continue harvesting oranges such as Valencia.

Test Garden Tip: Convert [vegetable garden](#) paths to weed-free zones by covering paths with newspaper or cardboard topped with pine straw, grass clippings, or chopped leaves.

Make a Garden

Give your yard more color and interest by putting in a new garden. Feed your family and grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs, or create colorful bouquets with a new cutting garden.

Here's a hint: Make maintaining your new garden easier with a raised bed. You can add high-quality soil to solve any problems with clay or sand. And you don't have to bend down so far to weed, plant, or tend to your plants.

Tackle Lawn Chores

- Fertilize Bermudagrass and Zoysiagrass lawns that were overseeded for winter. If you didn't overseed warm-season turf, don't fertilize it now. Also, don't fertilize St. Augustinegrass or centipedegrass yet.
- Grubs become active this month and feast on grass before molting. Check with your local extension office to learn which treatments work best in your area this time of year.
- Get the jump on crabgrass and goosegrass by applying a preemergent herbicide. Time applications to coincide with forsythia flowering.

Manage Groundcovers

- If you didn't get to it last month, trim mondograss and liriope before new growth appears. Use a lawn mower adjusted to the highest setting. Add a grass-catcher attachment to eliminate raking.
- Cut English ivy back hard. When new growth emerges in spring, it will be strong and healthy.

Refresh the Water Garden

- Clean debris and muck from the water garden, adding it to your compost pile.
- Divide and fertilize water lilies.
- Feed fish when the water temperature hits 50 degrees F.

Test Garden Tip: Gather and dispose of fallen camellia blooms to prevent blight from developing and spreading.

Mulch Matters

The single best thing you can do to save time and energy in the garden is spread mulch. A 2- to 3-inch-deep layer of mulch will stop many weeds from growing. It also helps your soil stay moist during hot, dry periods this summer.

Here's a hint: Look for inexpensive or free mulch materials in your area. For example, many municipalities offer a free compost pile for city residents.