



## March Garden Checklist

by Michelle Le Strange, UCCE Master Gardener Advisor Emeritus

Spring is almost here! Buds are starting to pop and plants will be leaping out of the ground. To help them along, apply 10-10-10 or triple 16 fertilizers to annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees. Remember, a little fertilizer goes a long way. If there's no rain in sight, water in slowly and deeply.

**Annual & perennial flowers:** To extend the life of cool season color like pansies, stock, and snapdragons, lightly fertilize, water as needed, bait for slugs and snails, and dead head, dead head, dead head (that means pinch off spent blooms)! Garden centers are brimming with cool season annuals in March and April, but resist buying, as hot weather is around the corner and they won't last long. Instead, start filling in bare spots and flowerbeds with drought-tolerant warm season annuals like ageratum, alyssum, bedding begonias, lobelia, petunias, salvia, and verbena.



Divide summer and fall blooming perennials like chrysanthemums, daylilies, and coreopsis while still semi-dormant. Use a spading fork to lift clumps and a spade to make a clean cut. Replant the young outer portions of the clumps and discard or compost the old center growth.

**Bulbs:** Plant summer bulbs such as calla, canna, dahlia, and gladiolus in fast draining soils premixed with a complete fertilizer.

**Citrus:** Prune off damage from frost, once growth begins. If damage was light, fertilize now. If damage was severe, wait until growth is active (maybe next month) before fertilizing.

**Deciduous trees:** Remove support stakes and tie straps from trees that have outgrown their need. Let me repeat that last statement. Remove support stakes and tie straps from trees that have outgrown their need. This is a pet peeve of mine. Drive around town and you will notice that there are hundreds of trees that are still tethered and strangling from their initial tree stakes and ties. FREE THE TREES! Also finish up any pruning before trees leaf out.

**Evergreen trees and shrubs:** Prune to enhance shape, but avoid heavy pruning unless there is a need to stimulate vigorous growth. To reduce overall size in pine trees cut the new growth "candles" back by half or one-third. Never remove them all the way, as that is their growth for the year.

**Lawns:** Fertilize cool season lawns such as tall fescue with a complete fertilizer (there are many good brands for turf available now) at rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. If needed, select a weed-n-feed, a fertilizer with preemergence crabgrass prevention. If lawn is totally ravaged, consider renovating or replacing it with a low maintenance groundcover. Wait until April to fertilize warm season bermudagrass lawns or to apply postemergent weed and feeds. If you want to apply broadleaf weed killers to bermudagrass lawns this month, that is okay.

**Roses:** Feed roses when spring growth starts. We encourage you to avoid over-applying insecticides to roses. Yes, they will get aphid infestations in the spring, but there are so many beneficial insects around that are hungry, we want them to have the aphids for food. This will keep them in our gardens longer. We also want you to have beautiful roses, so be sure to monitor for aphid infestations and dislodge them from foliage with a sharp stream of water from the garden hose. Aim for leaf underside. Heavy infestations may call for insecticidal soap. Or if you must, there is a rose food and systemic combination that will fertilize plus control sap-sucking aphids in the spring.

**Vegetables:** Before planting veggies in very sandy or heavy clay soils, add compost to help improve soil texture and water retention. Plant seed potatoes early in the month. Seed beans, beets, carrots, leaf lettuce, peas, and radishes. Transplant head lettuce. Transplant warm season vegetables like eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes, but provide cold protection (plastic mulch or hot caps). Otherwise wait until next month. Plant young herbs including chive, cilantro, parsley, and rosemary.

This is the nice time of year to be out in the garden. Get out there now and enjoy it while you can.



March 2017