



March Garden Tips 2017

by Thea Fiskin, UC Master Gardener

March is a guessing game with its fickle weather. When will we be safe from frost? There is always a chance of an unseasonable late frost, but March 15 is usually the date we use here in Tulare and Kings Counties. So, the first half of the month, do the chores and then do the planting. Try planting a new perennial or summer annual. Be sure to read the label so you plant in the proper location, sun or shade, and give it just the right amount of water.

Annual flowers: Sow seeds or plant seedlings of ageratum, alyssum, bachelor buttons, begonias, celosia, cleome, coleus, cosmos, duster miller, gomphrena, inpatients, lobelia, marigolds, nasturtiums, nicotiana, petunias, portulacas, salvias and verbenas. You can plant seeds of zinnias indoors or in a greenhouse now, but wait for warmer weather before planting in the garden.

Bulbs: Summer blooming bulbs such as cannas, calla lily, crocosmia, dahlia, gladiolus, liatris, lilies, ranunculus, tuberose and zephyranthes should be set in the ground now. Set out gladiola corms over several weeks to extend the bloom time. Buy caladiums now, but wait to plant until the soil is warmer; otherwise, they will rot.

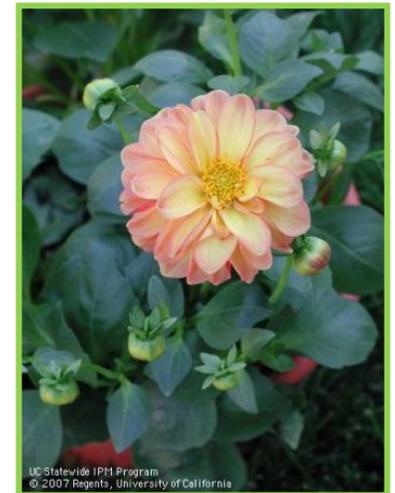
Citrus: Grapefruit, kumquats, lemons, oranges, mandarins, pomelos and tangelos all do well in Tulare County and need just a little more frost protection in Kings County. Limes can also be grown but are more frost sensitive and must get protection from frost. This is a fabulous month to plant citrus in your garden. Be sure to buy trees from local nurseries- do not import from out of our area.

Herbs: Plant chives, cilantro, dill, French tarragon, oregano, lavender, mint (in a pot), parsley, rosemary, sage and thyme. Be sure to plant these in a sunny location. Basil needs to wait until next month when the soil is warmer.

Perennials: Artemisia, brachyscome, ornamental grasses, penstemon, ornamental sweet potato, phlox, salvias, Santa Barbara daisy, sea thrift and yarrow can be planted in the spring. This is just a small sample of what can be planted, so visit your local nursery for even more ideas.

Vegetables: Plant seeds or seedlings of beets, carrots, chard, lettuce, peas, radishes and tomatoes. Garlic cloves and potatoes can also be planted. Start seeds of bell peppers, chili peppers and eggplant indoors, and then transplant them outdoors in April. Wait until April to seed okra, sweet corn and all cucurbits (cucumbers, melons, and squash).

Critter Control: Patrol for slugs and snails: either hand pick them or use baits. Baits containing metaldehyde are extremely toxic to kids, pets and wildlife. Baits containing iron phosphate are non-toxic to all, except the



Dahlia Blossom

snails, of course. Protect citrus trees and raised beds with copper tape. (I used it last year on my raised beds with very good results.)

Spittle bugs are occasionally an unsightly nuisance but do little damage. They look like little blobs of wet foam with a small bug in the middle. (They seem to really enjoy my rosemary plants.) Wash them off with a hose- nothing else required. Eliminating ants will help control aphids. Ants protect aphids, whitefly and soft scale insects and feed on the honeydew they produce. Eliminating ants will help the biological (or nature's control) efforts.

Attract good bugs by planting nectar plants, aster, Black-Eyed-Susan, chamomile, cilantro, coreopsis, dill, feverfew, gallardia, marigold, poppy and yarrow, to name a few. You can find seed packets in seed catalogs and nursery displays specifically designed with plant varieties to attract beneficial insects.

Garden Chores:

- Fertilize roses. Add a handful of Epson salt on each plant along with the fertilizer.
- Fertilize all perennials that are emerging from dormancy.
- Azaleas need to be fertilized after they finish blooming.
- Divide fall blooming perennial now: asters, chrysanthemums etc.
- Start to train vines and climbers, so they don't get out of control.
- Construct trellis for beans, cucumbers, peas and tomatoes.
- Check irrigation system equipment. Soon it will be time to water again. Fix faucets, valves and sprinkler heads. Check drip system, sprinklers and hoses for leaks.

Visit nurseries often, so when new plants arrive you can get the first pick. Plus, you see what new plants are being introduced. Most of all, get out there and enjoy working in your garden.



Black-Eyed-Susan

February 25, 2017