



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## March Garden Tips 2022 (March 5, 2022)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

Will we have another miracle March? Will we instead have warm snow-melting rains? Either way, life goes on, including with abundance and vigor this month in the garden. We started spring symptoms in February this year, but have already seen frost, hail, wind, and snow in the mountains. Will there be more? A typical March is beautiful with warm days and cool nights. Perfect for gardening, which is good, as there lots to do this month!



**PLANTING:** Spring is the second season of major planting. You can plant all varieties of trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers and vines. In the edible garden, plant heat-lovers like cucumber, tomato, melon, beans, eggplant and squash. You can also plant potato, radish, chives, greens, beets, and herbs of all types. Citrus, avocado, and other frost-sensitives should be planted in the second half of the month.

When buying citrus, please be sure to buy from a reputable Tulare or Kings County nursery so we don't spread the Asian citrus psyllid. That means saying "no" to the neighbor or family member who has an extra citrus tree for you, and that means not bringing citrus trees into the county from elsewhere in the State. There are regulations about movement of bulk quantities of citrus fruit to save the California citrus industry, much of which is in our counties. You can find out more from the CDFA website, or read the University of California Pest Note at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74155.html>

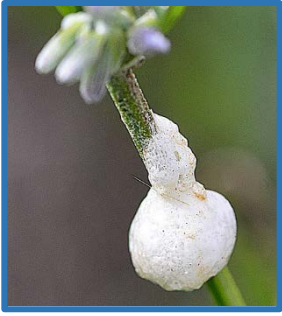
Many plants, native and non, bloom profusely in March. If you need quick color, plant ageratum, alyssum, bachelor buttons, begonias, celosia, cleome, coleus, cosmos, duster miller, gomphrena, inpatients, lobelia, marigolds, nasturtiums, nicotiana, petunias, portulacas, salvias and verbena. It is also the month to start planting summer blooming bulbs such as cannas, calla lily, crocosmia, dahlia, gladiolus, liatris, lilies, ranunculus, tuberose and zephyranthes.



**MAINTAINING:** Along with bursts of flowers and foliage, March also begins the major insect season. Hand picking large insects is easier on the garden and the ecology. Using traps like rolled up newspaper or boards is another way to catch and remove insect pests like snails, slugs, and earwigs.

If you must use chemicals for slugs and snails, use baits containing iron phosphate, which is not toxic to children, wildlife, or pets. Baits containing metaldehyde are extremely toxic. Tolerate some plant damage, especially from caterpillars, and especially on your ornamental (non-edible) plants. Think of them as the pretty butterflies and moths they will soon become. Bugs are also a major food source for nesting and hatching birds and for other bugs, toads, lizards and small mammals.

Start setting baits out now for Argentine and other non-native ants and rotate the chemical every three months. Eliminating ants will help control soft-bodied insects like aphids.



Spittle bugs are occasionally an unsightly nuisance but do little damage and don't stay long. They look like little blobs of wet foam on foliage. They seem to prefer rosemary and sage. If you can't stand it, a strong blast of water can dislodge them.

If rain is not plentiful this month, water your new transplants well and keep them from completely drying out. This attention to irrigation is one reason planting in the spring is more difficult than in the fall, although some springs are wetter than fall or winter, and maybe that will happen this season. If we have a dry spring, deep water trees and large shrubs and keep your controller on to provide some moisture to all plants throughout the month. Be sure to check your city's watering regulations first! During active growing is not the time to try to make your plants tolerate drought.

March is also a good month to fertilize roses. Use a specialty fertilizer meant for roses and do two smaller feedings instead of one. You can also fertilize non-native perennials and established citrus trees that are emerging from dormancy. Your California native plants don't need fertilizer, although you could give your acid-loving manzanita a weak dose of fertilizer labeled for camelias, azaleas and magnolias.

Weed control is in high gear. Cool season grasses have seeds; warm season weeds are blooming. Whether you use mechanical, chemical or a mix of control methods, remember weeds are trying to protect the earth's crust by reducing erosion. If you clear an area of weeds, what will replace these plants? Use rock, bark or living mulch (ground cover plants) to keep your soil on your property. When spraying herbicide, remember that many of your plants, including roses and California native species, are highly susceptible to damage from small amounts of herbicide drift, and you may not see that damage immediately. Follow label directions and protect desirable plants.

**CONSERVING:** While planting for spring, include at least one plant that increases the garden's diversity and usefulness for pollinators and/or other wildlife. Matching a plant with your soil and climate (including water availability) ensures fewer pests and less maintenance. If you want to try milkweed for the Monarchs, search out the native varieties, such as "narrow leaf."

If you haven't already done so, check your drip and sprinkler systems, cleaning filters, checking for leaks, and make needed improvements. Get ready for summer. Make sure your system is as efficient as possible. You may consider upgrading to a "smart" controller that can better adjust to the weather and water needs of the garden. I've tried several of them now, and most of them are reliable, affordable, and easy to use with a smart phone app. You still should check your system periodically to make sure there are no leaks or other problems.

With all this work, it's also important to remember to take time to enjoy the garden's bounty. Don't be afraid to leave the work for another day and just read a book in the sun or shade or watch the busy activity of your California garden in spring.

**The Tulare-Kings County Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions:**

Visalia Farmer's Market- 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears Building)

Ace Hardware, Visalia-1st Sat./every month, 10 am-1 pm

Luis Nursery, Visalia-2nd Sat./every month, 10 am-2 pm

Call us: Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30

Visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/)

Visit us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/mgtularekings14/>

Instagram at: @mgtularekings