

Urgent! Do These Things For Your North State Spring Garden Now

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, March 15, 2018

Q: What should I be doing in my garden and yard at this time of year?

A: You can tell spring is right around the corner by the number of plants blooming and weeds sprouting. Below is a list of things you may want to tackle around the yard and garden in preparation for the coming growing season.

Check tree trunks of younger trees (less than 15 years old) and re-paint the trunks with a 50/50 mix of white latex paint and water to help prevent sunscald. Or if you don't like to paint, use a tree wrap. This is the No. 1 thing you can do to protect your tree from getting damaged by the brutal Redding sun.



(Photo: Courtesy of Seeding Square)

Now is the time to be preparing garden beds for mid-April planting, if you plan to use organic fertilizers such as alfalfa meal or green manure. Dig organic material into your beds now and let sit until planting time. Soil organisms need time to break these down and deliver nutrients to your plants. If you plan to use animal manures, you should let beds sit at least 60-90 days before planting for food safety.

If you start your own transplants from seed, you should have them started already for transplanting in mid-April.

As you prepare garden beds for planting, practice plant rotation: remember where you planted various families last year (tomatoes/peppers/eggplant, cabbage/broccoli/kale, etc) and move these family of plant to a different beds this year. This will help you avoid insect and disease buildups that can wreak havoc in your garden later in the season.

Historically our last killing frost for the Redding area is sometime in mid-April but we have had later frosts. If you plan to set out seedlings before frost danger has passed plan to cover with frost cloth or with towels, flannel sheets, etc. Do not use plastic as it will not provide enough insulation to protect plants.

If you use a drip irrigation system, now is the time to check it to make sure water's being delivered where you want it, and make repairs as needed.

If your trees have not budded out yet, get in another application of dormant spray with fixed copper. This will help control the peach leaf curl and shot hole diseases.

Now is the time to consider replacement of some of your more water thirsty ornamentals with low maintenance native plants or plants more adapted to our hot climate.

Be sure to visit the various spring plant sales, at Shasta College (April 12-14) and Turtle Bay Nursery (April 6-7), for instance.

Prune out any non-blossoming limbs on early fruiting trees such as cherries, peaches, nectarines. But wait to prune apricots until summer; otherwise disease may enter the wounds.

Thin and shape your roses if you did not do this in fall, cutting out weak and crossing branches. Fertilize and mulch roses and other blooming shrubs with a flower and fruit fertilizer.

Check fences around gardens to make sure they are critter-proof and repair them as needed.

This is a great time to aerate and fertilize your lawn.

If you grow cane berries, prune back old canes and tie up younger canes. Don't forget to fertilize and mulch beds.

While the weather is still cool it is the perfect time to work on landscaping projects such as hardscapes, fencing, replanting, etc.

If you've left perennials or ornamental grasses standing with seed heads, to feed and give cover to birds, cut them back as soon as you see new growth.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.