

On Your March, Get Set, Go: Prepare Your Annual Garden, Lawn This Month

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, March 6, 2020

Q: What spring chores should I be doing in my yard and garden this month?

A: Spring is early this year, with many trees and shrubs already in bloom and weeds growing fast. Here is a list of things most gardeners do this time of year to get their yards ready for the spring and summer growing seasons.

Spring chores around the yard

- Turn on irrigation systems. Check to make sure they are working properly. Make repairs as needed.
- If you didn't do so in autumn, thin and shape your roses. Cut out weak and crossing branches. Fertilize and mulch roses and other blooming shrubs with a flower and fruit fertilizer.
- Remove weeds before they bloom and set seed.
- Paint or re-paint the trunks of trees younger than 15 years old with a 50/50 mix of white latex paint and water to help prevent sunscald. If you don't like the look of paint, use a tree wrap. This is the number-one thing you can do to protect your tree from getting damaged by the brutal Redding sun.
- Put the first application of the season of fertilizer on the lawn. Aerate if needed.
- Plant summer bulbs like dahlia, gladiolus, canna and tuberose.
- Deadhead spring bulbs but leave leaves until they start to yellow so the bulbs can store food for next year's bloom.
- Apply a new layer of mulch to shrub beds and around trees. Be sure to keep mulch several inches away from the trunk to prevent disease.
- Put out snail and slug bait. Make sure to use one safe for pets and children, such as Slugo.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs after bloom.
- Take cuttings of shrubs, perennials and succulents to start new plants.
- If you've left perennial plants or ornamental grasses standing with seed heads to feed and give cover to birds, cut them back as soon as you see new growth.



A dandelion sprouts up in a field of spring flowers. (Photo: Natasa Krizanic, Your Take)

Spring chores around the garden

- Prune grapes and cane berries. Don't forget to fertilize and mulch beds.
- Fertilize citrus. Keep feeding each month until September.
- Prepare garden beds for mid-April planting. This is usually when soil temperatures are above the 55 degrees needed for summer vegetables. 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.
- Plant peas, radishes, carrots, leafy greens and lettuce now.
- If your fruit trees haven't 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.
- Prune out any non-blossoming limbs on early fruiting trees such as cherries, peaches and nectarines. Wait to prune apricots until summer; otherwise disease may enter the wounds.
- Check fences around gardens to make sure they are critter-proof. Repair them as needed.
- Plant new shrubs, trees and annuals once danger of frost has past. For a good selection of new plants, visit spring plant sales at Turtle Bay, Shasta College and local high school agriculture departments.

For help with gardening ideas and spring chores join the Master Gardener Workshop on from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on March 28 at Shasta College. For more information, visit Facebook page "[UCCE Master Gardeners of Shasta County](#)."

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.