

YEAR ROUND GARDENING

MARCH GARDEN CALENDAR

By Eileen Tully, Colorado Master Gardener

This is winter's final gasp. It's been a tough winter in some ways –windy and dry. Even though we've had some warm sunny days, lack of moisture always takes its toll on the Colorado garden.

It's a transition month: some days will be fine for garden cleanup – some days, it will be deep winter. In the past, March has been our snowiest month, and while I love to see the miracle of emerging green life I'll admit that a few good snow showers would be welcome.

Become aware of the microclimates in your garden. Look for emerging plants and note which part of your garden is coming out of dormancy faster than other parts. In my front garden, lupine and Shasta daisies are sprouting up in mid-February while the gardens on my side yard are still dormant. The front garden faces east. Knowing which areas are warmer, more protected than others allows you to try plants that you normally wouldn't.

Basic Garden Chores:

Early Spring, before major planting, is a good time to have your soil tested. That way you'll know what you're dealing with and it will help you prepare your ground for planting. Soil test kits are available at the CSU Extension Office, 17 North Spruce, Room 220.

Prune Clematis jackmanii in early March before it comes out of dormancy. This cultivar of clematis blooms on new wood every year and if left unpruned, it will become spindly with decreased blooms. Cut stems back to 9" to 12" above ground with clean, straight cuts. Prune to just above two strong buds. In the coming weeks, when new growth appears, apply a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer and train the new stems, or tendrils, around a support like poultry wire.



Other vines can be pruned now when they are still dormant. If you can't do it now, wait until after they have bloomed before pruning.

Plant:

Indoors, after March 15th, start seeds under grow lights. Perennials like lupine and delphinium and annuals like cardinal vine, hyacinth bean vine, marigolds, zinnia, nasturtium and many more.

As soon as ground can be worked, till in 1" to 2" of composted cotton burrs or aged manure into your vegetable garden.

Mid-March plant peas and sweet peas directly in the garden, soak the seeds overnight.

Lettuce can be planted next, then radishes.

Fall-bearing raspberries can be planted mid-March. Some varieties are: Heritage, Fall Gold, Fall Red, September, Pathfinder or Trailblazer.

Garden centers will have small bare root trees and shrubs and bare-root roses on sale to tempt and tantalize you. Go ahead and succumb. These can be planted from now through April. If you're planting in March look for a time when we have predictions of three or four mild, pleasant days. Soak the roots overnight in a bucket to give plants a good start.

Late March fertilize evergreens and deciduous trees.

Lawn: Core aerate the lawn or have it done by a qualified lawn service. Aeration can be done anytime during the growing season, but to get your lawn off to a good start do it in March. Before aeration make sure the soil is moist to get 3" plugs. Leave plugs on the lawn.

If you had crabgrass problems last year apply a pre-emergent herbicide. However, once you've applied a pre-emergent you won't be able to put down grass seed. The herbicide will block the seed from taking root.

Tools: Get your lawn mower ready. Clean and sharpen the blade, drain gas and oil, and replace the sparkplug. If your hand tools weren't cleaned last fall, do it now.

For answers to urban horticultural questions, contact ask.extension.org. You can also follow the El Paso County Master Gardeners on www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC/.