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## MARCH

### MAINTENANCE

- ⊙ Dig, divide, and replant summer- and fall-blooming perennials such as agapanthus, chrysanthemums, daylilies, and yarrow. Do this if clumps are crowded or if last year's bloom was sparse. Lift clumps with a spading fork, and make a clean cut with a spade. Use the young outer portions of the clumps, discarding the older, coarser center growth.
- ⊙ Prune spring-flowering shrubs immediately after they bloom.
- ⊙ To rejuvenate perennial herbs such as sage and mint, cut back dead or old growth.
- ⊙ Mulch trees and shrubs to conserve moisture during summer.
- ⊙ Mow lawns on the highest setting to conserve moisture and shade weed seeds to prevent germination.
- ⊙ Citrus can be pruned now if desired or needed.
- ⊙ Prune boxwood, nandina, ligustrum, pittosporum, butterfly bush, camellia sasanqua, euonymus, cotoneaster, wax myrtle, hydrangea, and rose-of-sharon.
- ⊙ Rub off rose leaf buds that are facing the center of the plant. This will redirect growth to outward buds and help keep the center of the bush open. Watch too for sucker sprouts and remove by tearing them off at the base *not* by clipping.
- ⊙ Rose climbers such as Cecile Brunner, Lady Banks and Belle of Portugal, which bloom only once should not be pruned until after they have bloomed.
- ⊙ Prevent weeds in rose beds by applying Concern Weed Prevention Plus (8-2-4). This product contains corn gluten, which prevents seeds from germinating and contains 8% nitrogen, providing a slow-release fertilizer.
- ⊙ Watch for mosquito larva swimming in a bird baths and fountains. They are already out there so dump pots with water, or apply a few drops of oil or Mosquito Dunk to larger containers of water.
- ⊙ Check your drip systems now: flush out sediments, check for algae and scrub screens and emitters with a toothbrush if necessary. Turn on water and make sure all emitters are working properly and there are no leaks in the lines. Alternately, contact us to assist you with performing an irrigation audit on your entire sprinkler system.
- ⊙ Take a free composting class; call (408) 918-4640 for a schedule or check <http://www.reducewaste.org>.

## FERTILIZING

- ⊙ Feed lawns if you didn't do it last month. Bent, blue, fescue, and rye grasses begin their spring growth spurts now, and they need extra energy. Apply a complete fertilizer such as 20-5-10 at the rate of 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
- ⊙ Fertilize plants that are starting to grow actively, like annuals, berries, citrus, roses, and established shrubs and trees. Apply a slow-release high-nitrogen fertilizer such as 20-10-10 or alfalfa meal.
- ⊙ Deadhead and feed daffodils with a fertilizer such as Master Nursery Bulb Food when they're done blooming. Fertilizing at this time is crucial, as daffodils soak up the sun and store food in the bulb, all for next year's blooms.
- ⊙ Fertilize citrus in March, May, July, and September. In November, we also like to spread chicken manure around the base of trees (avoiding the trunk) to give them a slow nitrogen source.
- ⊙ Begin monthly feedings with a Rose & Flower Food. For an organic alternative, apply Dr. Earth Rose & Flower Fertilizer every other month. You can supplement either routine with two applications of Alfalfa meal: once in March and again in June. Alfalfa contains the chemical *triacontanol*, which spurs the formation of new canes.
- ⊙ If you haven't done so, put about one inch of Gold Rush or Bumper Crop over the rose beds to maintain a good level of organic matter.

## PEST/ WEED CONTROL

- ⊙ If your trees show any signs of distress or have previously been in distress, contact a professional tree service to diagnose and treat disease.
- ⊙ Handpick, bait, or trap earwigs, slugs, and snails. To trap earwigs, place cardboard tubes or lengths of rubber hose around the garden.
- ⊙ ***If your fruit trees show flowers or leaves, it is too late for dormant sprays.*** Check labels for growing season dilution rate, if problems such as brown rot or bacterial canker are present. Early symptoms are when the flowers turn brown, shrivel up and fail to produce much or any fruit. Cankers appear later. The most effective spray for brown rot/blossom blight is Ortho Garden Disease Control (Daconil). Microcop and Liqui-Cop are less effective. The spray should be applied just as the flower buds begin to show color, again at full bloom, and at petal fall.
- ⊙ Spray Malathion on apple and pear trees for woolly apple aphids, which appear as a white cottony substance, usually in crevices, healing pruning cuts and in the soil next to the trunk.
- ⊙ Fireblight can be a serious problem on pears and some apples. If you have had this problem you can spray Microcop or Liqui-Cop copper again before or during the bloom period in addition to cutting out diseased tissue.
- ⊙ Watch for 'bleeding' or oozing of sticky sap from stone fruit trees which may indicate Bacterial Canker. If the sap is clear, there is usually no problem, but amber-colored sap indicates a potential problem and will require spraying as trees come into bloom. Contact your favorite garden center or a certified arborist for further information.
- ⊙ Check citrus trees now for scale, a sucking insect that usually clusters along fruit stems, new growth and the undersides of leaves. If found, spray tree with horticultural oil. One week later spray with Malathion. Wait two weeks for a second application, and never

spray oil more than 4 times during the growing season. Ants running up and down the trunk often indicate the presence of scale, so look carefully, as more than one kind of scale may be present. If you have scale on your citrus, you may also have sooty mold (a black powder which rubs off easily) on the leaves of your plants. You can use liquid detergent ( 2 tablespoons/gallon) in a hose end sprayer to clean off the sooty mold before spraying with oil or Malathion. Check also for snail damage as snails will climb the trees to feed on the leaves.

- ⊙ Olive Fruit Flies can now be controlled with Monterey Garden Insect Spray whose active ingredient is Spinosad. Spinosad is an upgraded Bacterial Thuringensis and is accepted as an organic product. It must be used in conjunction with an Olive Fruit Fly Trap so you know when to spray your trees.
- ⊙ Watch for aphids when new leaves are one-half to one-inch long and begin to curl, particularly on plum trees. Spray with Master Nursery Pest-Fighter, Malathion or Sevin. Do not spray while there are flowers on fruit trees as these insecticides are extremely toxic to bees. A non-toxic approach is to 'blast' the aphids with a strong stream of water which will knock off a lot of them.
- ⊙ If your lawn has been beset with dead spots which seem to grow in size, the problem is probably insect grubs which can be eliminated with Bayer Grub Control or organically with Nematodes. Apply them now.
- ⊙ As new leaves emerge on roses, watch for aphids. Apply Master Nursery Pest-Fighter, horticultural oil, ( Do not use more than 4 times per year, at the rate of 2 1/2 tablespoons per gallon of water) or Safer Insect Killing Soap or Master Nursery Nature's Pest Fighter.
- ⊙ Cool, rainy weather is ideal for incubating Black Spot disease on roses. To discourage Black Spot disease, spray roses with Ortho Rose Pride Disease Control as a preventive.

## PLANTING

- ⊙ Set out nursery plants or sow seeds of summer annuals such as celosia, cosmos, globe amaranth, cinerarias, ageratums, impatiens, marigold, nasturtium, nicotiana, petunia, portulaca, salvia, and zinnia.
- ⊙ Plant summer-flowering bulbs such as calla, canna, dahlia, gladiolus, Mexican shell flower (Tigridia), tuberose, and tuberous begonia in fast-draining, well-amended soil.
- ⊙ Plant Asian lilies by the end of March. If you don't have space in garden beds, grow them in large pots. Plant deeply, and cover with alyssum or lobelia.
- ⊙ Indoors, sow seeds of annual herbs and warm-season vegetables such as basil, eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes for transplanting to the garden next month.
- ⊙ Set out seedlings of cole crops such as broccoli and cabbage, and plant carrots, green onions, potatoes, and radishes.
- ⊙ Plant citrus from 5-gallon cans. Try 'Washington' navel orange, 'Moro' blood orange, 'Eureka' or 'Meyer' lemon, or 'Oroblanco' grapefruit-pummelo hybrid.
- ⊙ Start summer vegetable and flower seeds indoors to transplant outside when soil warms.
- ⊙ Attract hummingbirds and butterflies to your garden by planting passion vine, trumpet creeper, cape honeysuckle and wild lilac.
- ⊙ Many types of ground cover can be planted now, including Mondo grass and ground morning glory.
- ⊙ Plant your herb garden now.

- ⊙ Put in broccoli and cauliflower transplants; start peas, lettuce, spinach and carrots growing from seed.
- ⊙ You should be noticing hummingbirds in action as the days warm up. They're hungry! To attract them to your garden the old fashioned way, plant any of the Grevilleas, Coleonema, Callistemon, and the native Arctostaphylos. For part sun, plant abutilon or any of the fuchsias. All of these plants provide early nectar for these garden friends.
- ⊙ Plant *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) from seed if you want to attract Monarch butterflies this coming summer and fall.

## **SHOPPING**

Smart buys include azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias in bloom.