

The Milford Garden Club is not only dedicated to civic projects which beautify the area, but also focuses on continuing education of horticultural. We share the February/March report with you to inspire you to fall in love with gardening! Contact us at milfordgarden@gmail.com

Be Patient! Spring is coming!!! With all the weather ups and downs, some tasks will depend on the conditions and the kind of gardening you like to do.

TRY TO STAY OFF FROZEN TURF AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!!

When you can't work outside:

Review all contracts with arborists, landscapers, and nurserymen. Remember, all pesticide applicators must be licensed to work on your property.

If you didn't get to it in the fall, this is a good time to get tools in order or repaired. Clean and sharpen cutting tools and apply linseed oil to wooden handles.

Put a spot of bright paint on tool handles to help find them in the garden.

Clean flower pots and planters...use one-part bleach to nine-parts water... this is also good for cleaning many garden benches and furniture (check manufacturer's recommendations).

Keep bird feeders filled and make fresh water available. Check to see if feeders or bird houses need repairs or cleaning. They can be washed with a 2% bleach solution. Make sure they are thoroughly dried before being put back into use.

Buy new gloves!!!

Houseplants

Shower off dusty houseplants...they will love it...don't use hot or cold water.

Check for insect pests, remove by hand or use an insecticidal soap spray if needed.

More houseplants are killed by over watering than under watering. Before watering...insert your finger into the soil. if it's moist under the surface wait a bit longer before watering. Use clay pots if you tend to over water.

If the soil surface, drainage holes or perimeter of a clay pot become encrusted with white salts, soak the pot, plant and all, in a tub of water for a few minutes to flush excess salts. After removing from the tub, let the pot drain freely.

In February, repot orchids if necessary. Orchids need excellent drainage.

In March, begin to fertilize houseplants. Repot the plant if roots are emerging from the bottom of the pot.

All kinds of cuttings root easily at this time of year, coleus, fuchsia, begonia for setting out in May. Geranium cuttings are very sensitive to high moisture and will rot.

In the Garden

If you made plans for this year now is the time to go over your notes and look through all those catalogs for inspiration and information.

Order early so you won't be disappointed and choose varieties that are disease and drought resistant.

Check with the cooperative extension or a reliable source like Gardeners.com for info on starting seeds indoors.

Take soil samples for PH testing before major planting. You can get a kit to do it yourself or take it to the cooperative extension. The soil must be dry. As per the soil test results ...apply the recommended amendments to the vegetable garden.

All seed packets will give you the information you need for planting in our zone, as well as time to germination. Depending on your choices, some seeds can be started in February or March indoors.

Others will be able to be seeded directly outdoors in cooler weather.

Usually in mid to late March, and as soon as the soil can be dug down a few inches.

Continue adding to your compost pile.....shredded newspaper, wood ashes, kitchen scraps, and garden materials as you clean the garden. Do not add meat or dairy.

In February, perform corrective pruning of trees and shrubs.....blueberry bushes, grape vines and fruit trees can be pruned in February.

Don't prune "bleeder trees": maple, beech, dogwood, elm and sycamore; until they are in full leaf this spring.

Push into place any plants that heaved from the soil during freezing/thawing cycles. Ease the roots back into the soil gently and cover with mulch to maintain an even ground temperature.

Start tender flowering bulbs like caladium and tuberous begonias indoors.

If you have plants in a cold frame, check temperatures and ventilation when the temperatures are above freezing.

Check tree branches for scale and egg masses.

Cut branches of flowering trees and shrubs. They can be forced now for indoor bloom.

Brush off excess snow and ice from trees and shrubs to prevent damage.

In March.....prune ALL plant material to remove diseased, dead, and weak or crossing branches.

Prune roses but wait until after flowering to prune climbers and ramblers. Always cut back to healthy green wood. Fertilize roses as new growth begins

Don't work the soil when it's wet. Workable soil will crumble apart when squeezed. It's too early for grub control.

Cut back all the perennials left standing for winter interest.

Cut back ornamental grasses to 3 inches tall.

Prune needled evergreen shrubs EXCEPT PINES before new growth starts.

Prune winter damaged hedges. Angle sides so top is narrower than the bottom to allow light to reach lower branches. If hedge renovation is necessary cut back to 6 inches from the ground and remove and replace any dead or damaged plants. Remove half the new growth each year.

Apply horticultural oil sprays to trees and shrubs after the danger of freezing nights has passed but before buds begin to open.

Rake lawn (when dry), over seed. DO NOT FERTILIZE.

Thin out old canes from blackberries and raspberries.

Fertilize shrubs with 5-10-5 or 10-6-4.

While looking for early flowering shrubs and bulbs keep a lookout for swarming termites and carpenter ants.

As temperatures increase, begin removing winter mulch and prune summer flowering shrubs that flower on new wood...such as butterfly bush , Russian sage and red twig dogwood .

Keep feeding the birds! It won't be long before the insects are out and the plants are up and the birds can feed themselves.

(This report was prepared by Connie Nichols, Milford Garden Club member and Orange County Master Gardener)