

It's Almost Spring!-Marching to the Garden

by Cynthia Brian

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It's about this time every year that I just can't take winter anymore. Depression sets in as the cold, rain, hail, wind, and overcast days darken my spirits. Just about when I'm ready to move to Hawaii forever, hope arrives with the blooming daffodils. This year my hills of daffodils are especially gorgeous. Over the years I've planted several thousand and my work is paying off big time. The plum and flowering peach trees are in full bloom adding their white and pink exhilaration and the tulips, calla lilies, Dutch iris, primroses, and cyclamen demand paint the landscape in brilliant palette reminiscent of Monet. Nature has rewarded me with a cacophony of colors that herald the sunshine into my heart.

Having been born and raised on a farm, listening to the earth and understanding the seasons has always been an essential part of my life. My parents extended their wisdom about nature as my father tended acres of crops while my mother expanded into flowers and vegetables. I remember how we all anticipated spring...the smell of the blossoms, the freshly tilled earth, and a promise that another year of rebirth had begun.

Gardening is to me the same as life itself. My garden supplies my family with food, flowers, butterflies, bees, birds, frogs and a multitude of thrilling surprises. I talk to my flowers, trees, and shrubs and they just seem to know how much I love them by constantly showering the landscape with an ever-changing display of blooms and beauty. In these times of extreme stress, my private therapy is to go into my garden to spade the soil, pull weeds, and prune the roses. My children enjoy helping and our many animals romp with us as we work. The ever-changing garden invigorates and energizes us.

I invite you to discover the many secrets your garden wants to whisper to you. Love and care for your plants by following my March garden guide. Join me in the garden and share the bounty.

Happy Gardening to you!

Cynthia Brian

Co-author

Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul

MARCH GARDEN GUIDE

March heralds the beginning of spring and it's time for gardener's to get busy. Cherry, flowering plum, and crabapple trees blossom, filling the air with fragrance, so prune a few branches and bring indoors to enjoy their beauty. Bulb beds are coloring the gardenscape as we await the vernal equinox, the beginning of spring.

∞WATCH your oak trees if you have them for oak moth larvae. If you notice large masses of green droppings on the ground, call in the professionals. For a smaller tree spray thoroughly with *Bacillus thuringiensis*, orthene, or carbaryl.

∞LAWNS are ready to be mowed regularly now. Feed with high-nitrogen fertilizer. If weather is dry, seed or sod new lawns. Pull any weeds, making sure to get the roots. To control crabgrass and broad-leafed weeds, spray paying careful attention to the labels.

∞SOIL PREPARATION is important for all new flower and vegetable gardens. Spade and till, adding organic soil amendments and compost from your pile. Work in a dry complete fertilizer.

∞COMPOSTING is still important for all your grass clippings and spring prunings. Don't forget to add some fertilizer and keep moist for speedier results.

∞PERENNIALS such as day lilies, agapanthus, yarrow, and flox need to be divided while they are semi-dormant. Replant healthy pieces after division.

∞FERTILIZE. This is the best time to feed all plants including fruit trees, annuals, roses, and shrubs. Mature trees need their nitrogen booster. Wait to fertilize rhododendrons and camellias with an acid fertilizer until next month and then when they are finished blooming. Don't forget to give food to your potted plants as well.

∞PEST CONTROL is important for all the new growth that attracts the creepy crawlies this month. Wash aphids off with a hose or use a spray gun with a little household detergent. Keep your vigilance on baiting or picking slugs, snails and earwigs. Use netting to keep birds and small animals from eating your plants.

∞MULCH to conserve moisture unless rains have been extremely heavy using bark.

∞VEGETABLE planting time is here for potatoes, herbs, beets, peas and carrots, peppers, and eggplant. Still time for broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower. Warm season vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and squash can be planted late in the month.

∞BULBS...your choice includes begonias, dahlias, gladiolus, watsonia, and callas....plant now for summer enjoyment.

∞PROTECT your new seedlings from the hungry mouths of birds by placing netting over them.

∞PRUNE pelargoniums and geraniums for fuller summer blooms.

May the sun shine in your garden and the stars in your heart!

HAPPY GARDENING TO YOU!

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