

Full, busy calendar for gardeners in March

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office

What a difference a year can make. The 2011 winter season brought on a significant freeze that damaged citrus trees, shrubs and even some early-planted vegetables.

This year's winter has been exceptionally mild, and the gardener's calendar has sped up accordingly.

Trees and shrubs are confused by the weird weather. I never have seen pecan trees bud so early. Well, I'm confused also! Perhaps the following checklist of things to do for the month of March will help provide some normalcy to life.

- Annuals: Set out copper plants, ageratum, ornamental amaranth and other annuals after mid-March.
- Fertilize landscape trees and shrubs: March is an excellent time to fertilize established landscape trees and shrubs as they come out of their winter dormancy period and put out new growth.



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Many types of vegetables usually can be established in the garden during March.

It is not necessary to punch holes in the ground to fertilize trees or shrubs or to use fertilizer spikes. Surface application of a granular fertilizer is quite satisfactory.

- Vegetables: Many types of vegetables usually can be established in the garden during mid-March, including transplants of tomatoes and peppers as well as direct-seeding of corn, cucumbers, eggplant, southern peas and many other vegetables.

Be prepared to provide cold-weather protection as needed. Even though it has been a remarkably

warm winter, Mother Nature has been known to deliver a surprise cold snap during this time of year.

Okra does not tolerate cool spells, so wait until mid-April before planting seeds.

- Hanging baskets: Late March is an ideal time to set out hanging baskets. The variety of plants that can be used is limited only by your imagination.

Suitable plants for hanging baskets include portulaca, ivy, geraniums, airplane plant, bougainvillea, English ivy, begonias and a host of others.



February 29, 2012



Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.



- Repot houseplants: It's an excellent time to repot houseplants. Gently knock the plant out of the pot and inspect the root system. If the roots are crowded and matted on the exterior portion of the root ball, put the plant in a larger pot.

- Avoid overplanting: Be selective in planting annuals and bedding plants. Set out no more than you can properly care for.

For limited garden areas, try using containers on the patio or porch.

- Camellias and azaleas: As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with an azalea-camellia fertilizer according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

- Planting trees and shrubs: If you haven't done so already, try to finish your shrub and tree planting during March so the plants can become better established before the approach of summer heat.

Remember, don't buy and set out more plants than you have time to care for — they will suffer for it during the summer. Remember, too, proper planting and bed preparation are critical.

- Weed killers and trees: Many landscape trees and shrubs are damaged or killed each year by the careless application of weed killers to lawns, including those found in mixes of weed killers and fertilizers (commonly called weed and feed).

Always read and follow all label directions very carefully including application near the drip line of landscape trees and shrubs.

- Dividing perennials: Divide existing clumps of fall-blooming perennials, such as chrysanthemums, autumn asters, Mexican marigold mint and physostegia (obedient plant). Separate the clumps into individual plants and set them at least 8 to 10 inches apart in groupings of five or more.

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At A Glance

WHAT: Minimize Tomato Stress Factors to Maximize Yields

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday

WHERE: 4102 Main St. (Carbide Park) in La Marque

DETAILS: Master Gardener Sam Scarcella will give an overview of the problems that could be occurring in your tomato garden and what to do about them to achieve maximum production.

INFO: Preregistration is required. Call 281-534-3413, Ext. 12, or email [galv3\(at\)wt.net](mailto:galv3(at)wt.net).

