

# Gardening Checklist for March

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



March 19, 2014



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson



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

**Paperwhites have been producing bountiful displays of scented flowers since mid-January. Paperwhites grow from bulbs and can often be seen growing in abandoned lots.**

Weird! That's my unscientific assessment of the 2014 winter season. The first day of spring will soon be here (March 20) according to the astronomical definition. From a gardening perspective, the exact timing of "spring" is less precise. Most weather forecasters are predicting fairly decent weather over the week. We should remember that arrival of spring season along the Texas Gulf Coast tends to

have a bumpy landing. Mother Nature has been known to deliver a surprise cold snap during this time of year.

Review the following gardening checklist for things to do as the spring season arrives.

**ANNUALS:** Copper plants, ageratum and ornamental amaranth and other annuals can be set out.

**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. 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 can

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

Be prepared to provide cold weather protection as may be needed. It is still too early to plant okra as okra does not tolerate cool spells. Wait until mid-April before planting okra 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.

**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 OVER-PLANTING:** 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 manufac-

turer's recommendations.

**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 & 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 8-10" apart in groupings of five or more.

**PLANT OF THE MONTH:** I received several inquiries about plants seen in landscapes producing bountiful displays of white flowers that look like small daffodils. They are known as paperwhites and are closely related to daffodils.

However, daffodils require a lot of effort to produce flowers in our area. Daffodil bulbs need to be chilled in the refrigerator for several weeks before planting. In contrast, paperwhites do not require chill hours. They started blooming across the county in January, and many plants still have an abundance of blooms. They are among the first plants to bloom in any landscape and the last

plant to die out when property has been abandoned.

Paperwhites have been setting blooms since mid-January and patches of paperwhites can still be seen by alert motorists with a sharp eye. In fact, paperwhites are commonly seen in vacant lots.

**Upcoming Programs**

TITLE: Tomato Stress Management

DATE: Saturday, March 29

TIME: 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

SPEAKER: Master Gardener Ira Gervais

TOPICS: How to identify and deal with production problems in your tomato garden.

PLACE: 4102 Main Street (Carbide Park), La Marque

PRE-REGISTRATION: Phone 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or e-mail [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)

