



FROM A GARDENING PERSPECTIVE...

PREPARING FOR SPRING

By

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A few early preparations for the spring gardening season will bring benefits all year long. Now is a good time to step back and take inventory of the landscape/garden. Consider what worked or did not work in the garden last year and decide that it is alright to make changes. Then start planning!

To prepare for spring gardening, follow these tips:

1. Inspect gardening tools and lawn equipment. Make sure all are clean and in good working condition.
2. Remove debris from gutters, ornamental ponds and other water features.
3. Prune fruit trees in late winter or early spring before new growth develops. A few examples are apple, pear and peaches. Pruning encourages healthy production and can make it easier to harvest produce.
4. Remove dead wood and suckers from trees and shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous.
5. Plant new (or transplant old) dormant shrubs. Remember not to plant too deeply. The root-flare, where the roots meet the trunk, should be just above the soil level. Even though fall might be the most favored time to plant trees, early spring is not too late. Regular watering is important for newly planted shrubs and trees.
6. Cutting back roses (just before new growth emerges) encourages strong new shoots that will produce lots of blooms. Cut away dead or damaged branches. Thinning allows better air circulation which helps resist diseases such as black spot.
7. Tidy up flower beds. Clean out leaves, branches and debris that have accumulated in the garden over the winter.
8. Dig up and divide overgrown perennials in early spring. A few that would likely benefit from division include Asters, Siberian Iris, Coreopsis and Yarrow. Older perennials will bloom better when not crowded and there will be many more plants to decorate the landscape or to share with friends!
9. Cut back ornamental grasses to about 4-6 inches tall. This is also a good time to divide grasses if they have gotten too large.
10. Cut back perennials almost to ground level.
11. If plants have been winterized with mulch, the mulch should be pulled back when plants begin to grow and danger of frost has passed.
12. The lawn should be raked to remove dead grass, thatch and fallen leaves.
13. When danger of frost has passed, the irrigation system should be checked. Make sure all spray heads and emitters are working properly and positioned in the intended direction. **Consider**

installing a drip irrigation system this year. It is a very efficient way to distribute needed water to each plant without overhead spraying. It is an excellent way to conserve water!

14. Early garden color can be accomplished by planting cool season annuals. A few examples that can take a little frost are Pansies, Violas and Snapdragons.
 15. Garden beds should be prepared by removing winter weeds. Spring weeding is usually easy since most weeds have not had time to grow a strong root system. After planting, a 3-inch layer of mulch will do a good job of preventing new weeds from growing.
 16. Start seedlings indoors. Determine the right time to start flower or vegetable seeds by estimating when the last hard frost is likely to occur. Most seed packets come with good instructions to follow.
 17. For vegetable gardeners, now is a good time to take a soil sample and have it tested. Kits and instructions are available at the Palo Pinto County Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service.
- *Bonus Tip:** Start a compost pile or bin from all the cuttings, clippings and leaves from the early spring cleanup. All the garden plants will richly benefit from the mature compost made from the fruits of this labor.

Questions are always welcome. Contact Cindy Vaught through the Palo Pinto County Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service at 940-659-1228.