

THINGS TO DO LIST FOR MARCH, 2019

PRUNING – Poinsettias can be pruned back now. Cut below the blooms to make the plant fuller. Prune fruit tree branches that are pointing towards the ground or crossing each other. Cut off all dead limbs back to good wood. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after they bloom and hedges that are overgrown.

PLANTING – Time to plant lots of herbs, onion sets, cantaloupes, collards, cowpeas, cucumbers, mustard, okra, peanuts, peppers, pole beans, pumpkins, radish, spinach, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, squash, broccoli, eggplant, watermelon, turnips and tomatoes. Flowers to plant at this time are balsam, begonia, cosmos, cockscomb petunia, phlox, pentas, salvia, sun impatiens and zinnia. Bulbs to plant at this time are Amaryllis, gladioli, lilies, and gloxinias. Plant caladiums in amended soil, with peat, cow manure and compost.

BLOOMING- The turquoise jade vine is spectacular along with the flame of the forest, Brazilian red cloak, chalice vine, petrea or queen's wreath, lady slipper orchids, cassias, bromeliads, begonias, citrus trees, mango trees, lobster claw heliconias, chenille, hibiscus, bougainvillea, yesterday, today and tomorrow, nun's orchid, phalaenopsis orchids, ixoras, kalanchoes, pentas, crinum lily, plumbago, thryallis, firebush, Amazon lily, amaryllis, wax begonia, verbena, torenia, salvia, portulaca, snapdragon, petunia, marigold, impatiens, geranium, dianthus, passion vine, peace lily, tabebuia tree, candlestick, blue sage and roses blooming. Visit a nursery now to start your showy potted plants and hanging baskets for summer color.

PLANT ADVICE –

- March is a good time to start new plants from cuttings.
- Mulching plants is especially important here for the dry months of March & April. Mulch mimics the forest floor and holds moisture in the soil. It protects soil from the intense heat of the sun and weeds. The decayed mulch adds needed organic humus to our poor sandy soil and improves plant growth. Most any kind of organic matter can be used, including grass clippings, kitchen scraps, coffee grounds, leaves, wood chips, sawdust and peat moss. The value of mulch cannot be over-emphasized. However, don't expect decayed mulch to supply all plant nutrients needs. Regular fertilizing, using a plant food that includes minor elements is essential here. Throw weeds away in the garbage. Keep weed containers hidden in the garden to save steps. Drill holes in the bottom of them, so they don't collect water.
- Water lawns once a week and feed two times a year, spring and fall. Use fertilizer, 6-6-6- or 10-10-10 with minor nutrients or turf builder. Water after applying. St. Augustine grass should be mowed three inches in height. (Tell that to your lawn man). Shorter mowing causes more weeds to grow and your grass to be in stress. Mowing high makes the grass blades take nutrients from the air and soil with the process of photo-synthesis, converting them to new plant growth. Fertilize lawns, palms, trees and shrubs now. Plant those seeds you have laying around. Use animal manure when you can, be organic.
- Control black leaf spot on roses by keeping the foliage dry. Pick up and throw away the diseased leaves.
- Place orchids in a shadier place as the sun's intensity increases. Apply time release fertilizer, Nutraccoat. Plus weak liquid fertilizer, weekly. Orchids that have outgrown their pots can be repotted after they bloom. They are less care, if they are mounted on trees.
- Plant tropical and subtropical fruit trees now so they can be well rooted by winter.

INSECTS – Look for Insects on the new growth of plants. Curling and unsightly leaves are visual signs of aphids, leaf miners and the green horn worms on tomatoes. Curling leaves on citrus are caused by the caterpillar of the black swallowtail butterfly. Do not kill them. Watch for lubber grasshoppers, they grow three to four inches long and hatch out in March, April and May. At their early stage, they are black and orange and about one inch long. Look over crotons now for green scale. Learn who the good bugs are.

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