



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints



March 2020

There may be a strong temptation to start removing winter mulches from your flower beds, but wait! Pull mulch off gradually as the plants show signs of new growth. The purpose of winter mulch is to act as a protector from sudden changes of temperature and chilling winds, so keep in mind that it is still winter. Acclimatize your plants by removing the mulch over a period of days, allowing the light and air to reach the new growth slowly. It is much better to remove the mulch a little later than to remove it too early.

Alternating thawing and freezing can tear plant roots and even force the plant right out of the ground. If you notice any plants that have heaved, push them back into the soil, and tamp the soil lightly with your foot.

Dormant oil sprays are highly refined petroleum products that are mixed with water and applied to trees and shrubs to control aphids, spider mites, and scale. Dormant oils destroy pests by suffocating, especially eggs at this time of year. It is still possible to do dormant spraying until March 15th. After that date dilute the spray by half. Spraying should only be done on a calm day with the temperature above 40 degrees F.

Fertilize shrubs and trees if not done in February. Use an acid type rhododendron fertilizer to feed evergreens, conifers, broad leaf evergreens, camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas. Use an all-purpose fertilizer to feed roses and other deciduous trees and shrubs. If you use granular type fertilizers, be sure to water it in thoroughly or plan to apply just before a good rain. Divide and transplant summer blooming perennials and fertilize established ones as soon as new growth appears. Fertilize any bulbs that have finished blooming with bone meal or bulb booster.

Take a little time to prepare the vegetable garden soil for planting. The additions of well-rotted manure, processed manure, peat moss, or compost are good additives for building humus in the soil.

Houseplants will react to longer days and brighter light at this time by putting out new growth. The end of the month is a good time to pinch them back to generate new growth. You can begin fertilizing again with a dilute solution of soluble houseplant food. Turn your houseplants a quarter turn each week to make sure all sides of the plant receive adequate light and to

keep the shape of the plant balanced. Remain vigilant in watching for insects and pests. Mist or spray your houseplants to clean away the winter's dust, prevent spider mites and add a little humidity. Repot houseplants so they will grow well during spring and summer.

Keep an eye out for slugs as the weather warms. Pay special attention to soft, new growth which slugs love. Use nematodes for an effective organic control. Crushed egg shells also work by making a circle around the plant. The egg shells when crushed slice the slugs as they crawl over them. UGH!

Lastly, clean out all of your birdhouses now, so that they will be ready when the birds return.



--Sandy