



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – March Helpful Hints

2022

Spring officially arrives this month on Sunday, March 20th. In our Northeast Climate Zone 6, many tasks are only to be started if and when the snow melts, the ground defrosts, and mud starts to dry. As you eagerly await those glorious first Signs of Spring in your garden, here are a few helpful hints to get you started on a successful growing season!

Things to do this month...

PRUNING AND FERTILIZING

- If you haven't already done so, finish pruning small trees and shrubs early this month before they break dormancy. Complete tree pruning before new growth begins.
- Fertilize shrubs and trees if this wasn't done in February. Use an acid type rhododendron fertilizer to feed evergreens, conifers, broad leaf evergreens, 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.
- Prune all plant materials to remove any diseased, dead, weak or crossing branches.
- Prune late-flowering shrubs such as buddleia and hydrangea paniculata but wait until after flowering on early flowering shrubs such as forsythia, hydrangea macrophylla, rhododendron and syringa (lilacs).
- Wait to prune evergreens, hedges and other shrubs until late spring into early summer
- Prune all fruit trees before growth begins
- Prune hybrid tea roses, floribunda and grandiflora roses, but wait until after flowering on climbers and ramblers
- Cut back old foliage of European ginger, hellebores, and *Epimedium*, for example, which will soon be replaced with a fresh flush. Yes, the plant will do just fine even if you leave it on, but plants with early blooms will look much better without the old dried leaves.
- Cut down ornamental grasses to prevent mice and other rodents from nesting among the leaves. Trim grasses back to a height of 6 inches before they begin greening.

IN THE GARDEN

- Don't walk or work in soggy soil, or trod frozen lawns unnecessarily. Love your soil, and protect it!
- Delay spring clean-up. Some overwintering insects, notably bees and certain butterflies and moths, are triggered by a steady stream of 50-degree days to get moving. Once they do, often after resting in leaf litter or under tree bark, they're no longer as vulnerable to our spring cleaning actions that might kill them, or move them away from their host plant.
- When ready to begin clean-up, gently clear debris off beds that hold the earliest bloomers first, like areas where bulbs are trying to push up through sodden leaves or where trilliums and other spring ephemerals are growing. Acclimate 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.
- Plant primroses and pansies in containers for early spring color!

HOUSEPLANT CARE

- House plants will react to longer days and brighter light at this time by putting out new growth. The end of this month is a good time to pinch them back to generate new growth and to thicken them.
- You can then begin fertilizing again with a diluted solution of soluble house plant 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.
- Mist or spray your houseplants to clean away the winter's dust, prevent spider mites and add a little humidity.
- Remain vigilant in watching for insects and pests. It is much easier to win a 'bug war' if you are aware of the infestation in its early stages.
- Begin to transplant pot bound houseplants.

VEGETABLE GARDENING

- Take a little time to prepare the vegetable garden soil for planting. The addition of well-rotted manure, processed manure or compost are good additives for building humus in the soil.
- Peas and sweet peas may be planted right now as well as perennial vegetables like asparagus, rhubarb and horseradish. Eggplant, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, leek, onion seeds and early potatoes can be planted in the garden about mid month.
- Sow seeds of annuals and many vegetables such as tomatoes indoors which require 10 to 12 weeks before transplanting.
- Plant cold weather vegetables like spinach, peas, lettuce and broccoli as soon as soil is workable.