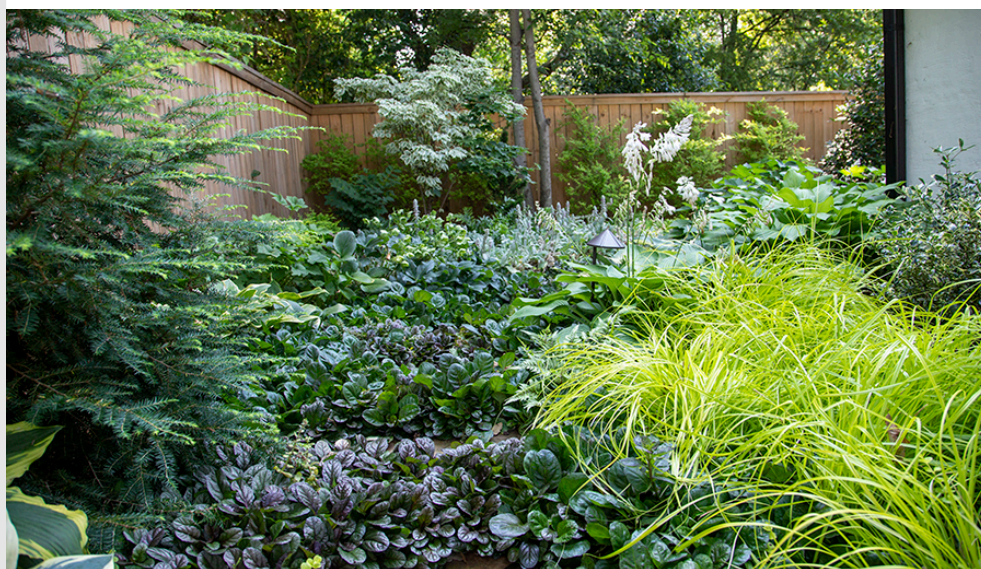




Get Growing: A Great Garden Awaits Those Who Think Ahead in March

Posted by Sarah DeClerk | Feb 29, 2024 | Home & Garden, Magazine | 0  | ★★★★★



This month brings the end of winter and beginning of spring, and with warmer temperatures and longer days on the way, Arkansas plant lovers who have been itching to get their hands dirty can finally move forward on some gardening tasks.

“Don’t wait too long,” said Chris H. Olsen, landscape designer and owner of Botanica Gardens in Little Rock. “Mid-February through mid-March is the best time to get

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Chris H. Olsen, landscape designer and owner of Botanica Gardens in Little Rock, said early March is an ideal time to tackle last-minute winter chores before the weather warms up in earnest.



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Pruning existing perennials is one of the main tasks to complete this month. Olsen advised cutting back perennials, roses and most ornamental grasses except for most sedge grasses.

“Even evergreen ferns and liriopse need to be trimmed back in February and March,” he said.

He also recommended pruning hydrangeas that bloom on new wood, including tardiva, pee gee and limelight varieties. Trim back crepe myrtles only if necessary, he said.

“Do not trim or prune back spring-blooming plants,” he added. “They need to be trimmed and pruned after they bloom, if necessary.”

Rebarking flower beds is another task gardeners can add to their to-do lists. Add additional nutrient-rich supersoil to garden beds if needed, Olsen said, and then rebark using mulch. Olsen said he prefers to use single-hammered hardwood mulch.



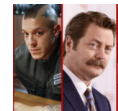
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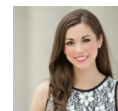
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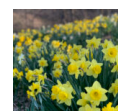
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Although some may be eager to get new plants in the ground, Olsen said gardeners tend to plant spring and summer annuals too early. The best time to situate those warm-weather babies is in mid-April, when there is no danger of frost, he said.


However, gardeners who want to start planting this month might find early March the ideal time to add plants that can withstand cold temperatures to their beds.

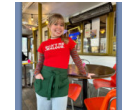
“Now is a perfect time to plant any winter-hardy plant,” Olsen said. “The disadvantage is that some hardy plants are dormant, and you will not see anything that you planted, but rest assured that the sleeping plant will be developing its root system, even during the winter, since our ground does not freeze.”

That said, gardeners will not have to wait too long to start selecting warm-weather plants at local garden centers. Olsen said the best inventory can be found from mid-April to mid-May, when temperatures are warm but not too hot.

When selecting plants, gardeners should pay special attention to the root systems of their prospective picks.

“The most important thing is to make sure the plant has a good root system. You do not want the plant to be wobbly in the pot, and it’s OK to pull it out of the container and examine the root system,” Olsen said. “The top growth should be dark green and lush.”

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For those who plan to go above and beyond by overhauling or adding to an existing garden this year, Olsen recommended getting a design before starting work. A design is worth the investment and builds a firm foundation for the garden, he said.

For gardening newbies, research is key, he added.

“Read, read and ask,” he said. “There is lots of information online, and ask your garden center expert. You may want to take the Master Gardener class to learn more.”

With spring en route this month, Olsen advised gardeners not to procrastinate on the winter chores that can ensure a beautiful garden for the year ahead. With moderate temperatures, late winter and early spring are great times to tackle gardening tasks.

“It’s not hot, so get those garden chores done,” Olsen said.

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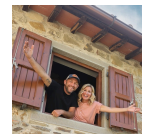
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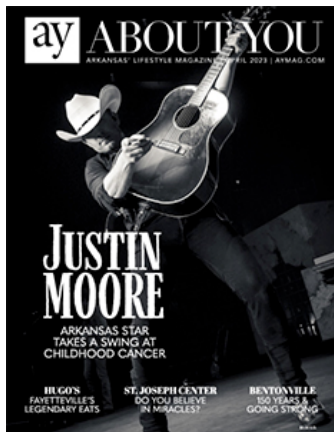
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