

Preparing Your Garden for Spring

By Bettylou Sandy

The Gardens are sleeping now, yet they are working on their root systems, unseen. As a sleeping child, we must make sure they are covered for “the night” with leaves or mulch to protect them from dramatic changes in temperature. Snow is a great insulator, but in an “open winter” without snow, we need to provide a safe covering for the plants and root systems. The leaves of fall are a great resource of this purpose.



The following “*to do’s*” are not necessarily in order within the month, just time to do them sometime in the month unless specified. Everything is weather dependant. Not everything is necessary do. Relax! Do a few things as you are able and enjoy the exercise and the promise of spring!

February - Now is a good time to:

- . Pick up branches and save them for plant supports in the growing season
- . Cut back stalks and grasses to 6-8 inches
- . Pick up surface stones and save for drainage solutions
- . Knock off heavy snow from branches, shrubs, bushes and trees
- . Prune fruit trees and grape vines
- . Check for drainage problems
- . Feed the bulbs (milk, provides calcium and vitamin D)
- . Photograph your gardens from 2 angles to start a photo record of seasonal changes
- . Build window boxes and containers
- . Re-pot indoor plants, which need it
- . Read some good gardening books and catalogs
- . Plan your gardens and tasks
- . Buy seeds and test left over seeds from last year for germination rates
- . Order plants and shrubs from a good nursery
- . Clean up the shed and the garage
- . Pot any bulbs left from last season and bring inside to force
- . Sort and repair your equipment
- . Force some Forsythia and Quince every week for continual blossoms
- . Rake the lawn to clean and stimulate
- . Plan lawn repairs for March

March –

- . Loosen Leaves on bulb areas and beds
- . Remove heavy blankets of leaves from beds with a pitch fork
- . Add leaves from gardens to compost piles
- . Start turning the compost pile, or poke air holes in it to stimulate
- . Loosen and neaten the mulch

- . Clean the edges of the gardens
- . Rake the lawn to clean and stimulate (like a scalp massage)

- . Lightly spread compost on lawns that are recovering from chemical treatments, or need more organic matter
- . Add lime to acid soils
- . Add compost to flower beds, fertilize as needed
- . Fertilize shrub beds with composted cow manure
- . Spread Gypsum along roadsides, driveway and pet areas
- . Do some selective pruning for health (winter damage repair)
- . Enjoy the crocuses, primrose and heather
- . Force some more Forsythia
- . Have a tea party for the bulbs and tubers (tea stimulates growth, milk feeds)
- . Prepare the Vegetable garden for planting
- . Plant your peas outside mid March, or when weather permits
- . Start your Tomato plants
- . Turn over your compost pile

April –

- . Divide and transplant perennials
- . Clean the edging of the beds
- . Establish new beds, shrubs and trees
- . Add some compost to your beds, if you did not last month
- . Mulch everywhere to hold in the moisture in the dry season and keep down weeds
- . Plant Pansies (a cold weather annual)
- . Plant cold weather vegetables
- . Enjoy Daffodils, Narcissus and Forsythia

April and May –

. Indoor plants can come outside for *daytime visits* in the shade, on warm days, but must go back inside before evening. This will help them become accustomed to the more direct sunlight and air. If plants suddenly are outside in full sun all day after being inside for the winter, they will become sunburned and be in shock, much as we can.

Plants cannot stay outside at night until the end of May because our last chance of frost is usually the end of May

BUT

Spring will be here, so prepare now!

The more you do to prepare in the springtime, the more you can relax and enjoy the summer!

Happy Gardening!