

March in the Tallahassee Garden

Katherine LaRosa
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Our cold weather may not be finished but cold damage to succulent foliage should be trimmed right away so that rot does not spread and kill the crown. This includes aloe, amaryllis, society garlic, crinum, daylilies and agapanthus. Leave the damaged portions of woody plants and of tropical plants such as banana, palm, ginger and philodendrons until new growth appears. Cut injured plants back to the point where there is live plant tissue. Bananas should be cut back until the stalk center begins to show green.

Shrubs and Trees: Fertilize camellias now using 16-4-8 fertilizer with fifty percent water insoluble nitrogen. Young camellias should be fertilized again in early June and in September. Prune camellias now through mid-month if necessary to enhance the shape or to control size. Finish heavy pruning of trees and shrubs. Delay pruning spring-flowering shrubs until they finish blooming. Fertilize young trees and shrubs which are not yet well-established. Apply dormant oil spray to control scale on camellias, hollies, gardenias and other susceptible plants.

Fruit Trees: Thin the fruit on apples and pears as the clusters form. Thin each cluster to the single largest fruit. Some clusters may need to be completely removed until the fruit are about six inches apart. Peaches and nectarines should be thinned to a six-inch spacing before the pits harden. Fertilize citrus and bananas.

Annuals and Perennials: Sow seeds of cleome, cosmos, larkspur, marigolds, nasturtiums, sunflowers, sweet peas, and zinnias. Plant petunias, phlox, geraniums, stock, alyssum, gerbera daisies, dianthus, shasta daisies, stokesia, coreopsis, and perennial salvia. Plant summer bulbs including cannas and agapanthus but wait until late April or May to plant caladiums. Plant gladiolus corms every two weeks until July. Divide overcrowded clumps of perennials. As spring flowering bulbs finish blooming do not cut the leaves. They nourish the bulb for next year's blooms.

Lawn care: Resist fertilizing your lawn until April, at least three weeks after green-up. Sharpen your mower blades. Centipede grass should be cut to a height of 1 ½ to 2 inches. St. Augustine and bahia grass should be cut to a height of 3 to 4 inches. Proper mowing height results in a deeper root system and healthier grass. As the soil warms, centipede and St. Augustine grass can be sprigged or plugged in new lawns or in old lawns to renovate them. If you over-seeded your lawn with winter rye, cut it very close so that sun can reach the permanent grass.

Vegetables and Herbs: After March 15, in full sun and well-drained soil, begin planting beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, southern peas, peppers, squash and tomatoes. Plant summer annual herbs such as dill, basil, and savory. Also plant parsley, oregano, thyme, and rosemary.

Roses: Roses require a good spray program to thrive in our heat and humidity. Begin your spray program in March. Spray a fungicide and pesticide every seven to ten days. Water well the day before spraying. Follow label directions carefully and wear protective clothing. Fertilize

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monthly throughout spring and summer.

Bamboo: Bamboo has a two-month shoot season. During the shoot season remove all new shoots as they appear to control the bamboo's spread. The shoot season for running bamboo is early spring, for clumping bamboo it is mid- to late-summer.

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