Here I am again with suggestions for what you should or shouldn’t do this month in your garden. I’ve enjoyed writing this column for the past five years and I’ve learned so much at the same time. However this is my last column. Starting in April we can enjoy a fresh perspective on the topic from Elizabeth Schmidt, a Master Gardener volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County, and Beth Weidner, Park Manager of Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park. In the meanwhile, here’s what I plan to do this month.

**Shrubs and Trees:** Prune spring-flowering shrubs such as loropetalum, quince, azaleas, and spiraea after they finish blooming, but by the end of June, to preserve next year's flower buds. Established trees and shrubs in well-mulched landscape beds don’t need fertilizer unless they are showing signs of decline. Even then, have your soil tested before fertilizing. Decline may be due to factors other than a lack of nutrients, such as disease or pest problems.

**Annuals and Perennials:** Leave your cool-season bedding plants (pansies, petunias, snapdragons, etc.) in the ground as long as they are doing well. Plant summer-blooming bulbs, corms, and tubers including gladiolas, cannas, gingers, lilies, dahlias and agapanthus. Sow seeds of cleome, cosmos, marigolds, nasturtiums, sunflowers, and zinnias. Plant calibrachoa, Torenia ‘Summer Wave’, butterfly bushes, coleus,
melampodium, pentas, salvia, Profusion zinnia, lantana, geranium, and other summer
annuals and perennials. It’s better to wait until late in the month or early April to plant
periwinkle, portulaca, impatiens, and caladiums. Bedding plants are heavy feeders so
fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer after planting and once a month thereafter. Give
daylilies a light application of a slow-release fertilizer. Dig and divide summer and fall
blooming perennials such as fall asters, chrysanthemums and salvias.

**Lawn Care:** Wait until at least three weeks after your lawn completely greens up before
you fertilize. Think twice about fertilizing your lawn this year. Following good lawn care
practices on a well-established lawn can reduce the need for applications of fertilizer. In
any event, centipede grass should not be fertilized until April. St. Augustine and
centipede grass can be sprigged or plugged this month once the soil warms up. If you
plan to plant or establish a new groundcover bed to replace a portion of your lawn, plant
it now before the hot weather.

**Fruit:** Fertilize peaches, pecans, grapes, pears, plums, figs, persimmons and other fruit
trees with a fertilizer that contains zinc and other minor elements. Do not over-fertilize
persimmons. Excess nitrogen will result in fruit drop. Also fertilize citrus and bananas.
Thin the fruit on apples, persimmons, and pears as the clusters form and thin peaches and
nectarines before they reach the size of a walnut. Deciduous fruit trees generally require
spraying with a home orchard spray. Follow the label directions carefully.

**Vegetables and Herbs:** Plant dill, basil, parsley, oregano, thyme, savory, borage, ginger,
lemon balm, and rosemary. After March 15, in full sun and well-drained soil, begin
planting beans, sweet corn, eggplant, southern peas, and tomatoes. Plant cantaloupes,
squash, cucumbers and watermelons danger of frost is past. Don’t plant okra, sweet
potatoes, and peppers until April.

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