

What to Do in March

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I can feel it, or maybe it is just wishful thinking, but spring must be just around the corner! You may already be seeing some of your plants waking up from winter dormancy, but that doesn't mean that cold weather is behind us. I checked a few mesquite trees to see if they were convinced that winter is over, and there was no sign they were beginning to bud out. We need to take this time to finish – or start – preparations to make our 2023 landscapes successful. The major resources for the monthly tasks listed below are *Lone Star Gardening* by Neil Sperry and *Texas Garden Almanac* by Doug Welsh.

Planting tips for March:

- Plant cool season vegetables such as leafy and root crops early in the month.
- Plant warm season vegetables 1-2 weeks after the average date of the last killing freeze which is March 23rd in our area. Some examples of these vegetables are beans, tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, melons, and peppers.
- Plant cool season annual color such as petunias, larkspurs, and stocks for color in pots and beds.
- Plant warm season annual color such as zinnias, marigolds, celosia, begonias, and coleus 1-2 weeks after the last killing freeze. Plant tender annuals such as pentas, lantanas, and moss rose about 1 month after the average date of the last killing freeze.
- Plant summer and fall perennials. Consider blooming season, height, width, and color when planting.
- Plant new lawns. St. Augustine or Bermuda can be planted from sod, but wait another month to plant Bermuda from seed.

Pruning tips for March:

- Scalp the lawn early in the month.
- Prune evergreen shrubs before new growth begins. Use hand tools to remove no more than 25 percent from the branches.
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs and vines.
- Prune trees to remove low-hanging, dead, and damaged branches. Do not prune oaks during the spring to lessen the chance of oak wilt fungus.
- Prune 30-40 percent of recently dug or transplanted trees and shrubs.

What to feed in March:

- Feed trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and vines by applying a lawn-type fertilizer as soon as buds begin to swell. Do not use a weed-and-feed fertilizer since they can damage landscape plants.
- Feed spring-flowering trees, shrubs, and vines after they finish blooming.
- Feed annuals and perennials in beds, pots, and containers. Use the fertilizer recommended for the specific plant.

Miscellaneous tips:

- Lots of planting is happening this month so be sure to prepare the soil properly. It is always advisable to have your soil tested. Sample bags and information sheets are available at the Taylor County Extension Office.
- Apply pre-emergent weed killer 2 weeks prior to average last killing freeze date to control summer annual grassy weeds. Repeat 90 days later.
- Don't fertilize the lawn yet. That task should be saved for next month.

- Mowing will remove many broad-leaf weeds. Most weeds won't survive in a properly watered, fertilized, and mowed lawn.
- Monitor fruit and nut crops for insect pests and disease. Use recommended products to manage any problems.
- Water your landscape if there is not sufficient rainfall this month. Check the moisture in the soil with your finger to determine when to water.
- It's important to remember that what you do this month will determine how successful your landscape will be this year.
- Remember to provide food and water for birds, butterflies, and wildlife.

Remember the landscape plans you made during the winter months? Look at those again before planting this month and next month and make changes if you see some extra bare spots where plants didn't survive the winter. A good source of plants that will survive and thrive in our area will be the Big Country Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale next month. The online sale will start on April 12th, and the in-person sale will be on April 15th. Watch for information on our Facebook page and website plus newspaper articles where we will provide information about plants we will have for sale.

BCMGA will offer several free education programs in March. We will have a program on Herbs at 6:00 on March 7th at the Abilene Public Library South Branch and the same program at 10:00 on March 10th at the Abilene Public Library Main Location. We will also have the BCMGA Saturday Seminar from 9:00-12:00 on March 25th at the Taylor County Extension Office Conference Room, and the topic is Gardening in West Texas.

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you will like our Facebook page and visit bcmgtx.org for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!