

End of March Garden Tasks

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There is lots of action in the garden and landscape at this time of the year. Here are some tasks and activities to consider.

Tomatoes- The air and soil temperatures have warmed up enough in San Antonio to place tomato transplants in the garden. Hill Country gardeners should wait a few more weeks. Use one of the recommended determinate selections such as HM 1826, Red Deuce, Valley Cat, Tycoon, Celebrity, Phoenix, 444, or BHN 968. Plant tomatoes in full sun.

Prepare the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 4 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) over every 50 sq. ft. of garden bed. Place each plant in a tomato cage for support of the heavy fruit.

Snapdragons- There was a pause in snapdragon bloom after the freezes in January but they are now moving into full bloom again. The bloom should last until mid-May when the heat and fungal disease, rust ends their production. Keep them weeded. Snapdragons make excellent cut flowers, especially if you have the "Rocket" selection.

Peaches- In many landscapes only the early low chill peaches such as Florida King and Springold received enough winter cold to bloom and set fruit. To protect the fruit from insects such as stink bugs and plum curculios spray every week with Sevin. To prevent the fungus disease brown rot, include Captan in the weekly spray. Organic gardeners can try one of the fruit sprays with an organic insecticide as the active ingredient.

If you have the higher chill peaches such as Junegold, La Feliciano, and most other selections expect them to eventually leaf out but they won't have produce fruit this year. Even our most reliable plums such as Methley and Santa Rosa did not receive enough cold to bloom and set a crop.

Lawn- Fertilize the lawn with slow release lawn fertilizer after you have mowed real grass 2 times. That may be the end of April. In the meantime keep the weed grasses such as rescue grass and annual bluegrass mowed every 2 weeks. Lawns on thin soils also probably have horseherb (straggler daisy) growing. The butterflies obtain nectar from the little yellow flowers and it responds well to mowing as part of the sustainable winter lawn. It is late to apply a pre-emergent such as Amaze to prevent sand burs but I would go ahead to reduce the number of sticker plants you have to endure this summer.

Monarch Butterflies- In April the migrating Monarchs will pass through San Antonio. If there is milkweed available some of the migrants will lay their eggs to produce a replacement generation to continue the migration north. For the first time this year it appears that several species of native milkweed will be available at area nurseries to plant along with the readily available Mexican milkweed. If your favorite nursery does not native milkweed transplants, seek out one of the native plant nurseries. Other good butterfly nectar plants are mistflower, zinnias, porter weed, lantana, and salvia.

Onions- Now that the roots and tops are well developed the onions are beginning to grow bulbs. Make sure there is 6 inches between plants to allow adequate space for full bulb development. Give them

another application of slow release lawn fertilizer. One cup of 19-5-9 for each 8 feet of row works well. The tops will flop over about June 1 indicating that they are ready to be harvested.

Roses- The roses are in bloom all over the City. The tough modern roses such as Belinda's Dream, Knockout, Katy Road (Carefree Beauty Pink), and Grandma's Yellow, along with the old fashioned roses such as Butterfly Rose, Mrs. Dudley Cross, and Martha Gonzales are spectacular. They will continue blooming over a long period without sprays or regular pruning.

Protect the more delicate hybrid teas with a spray program that includes the ingredients acephate for insects and triforine for black spot fungus. Fertilize every month with slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) and irrigate every week.