

Gardening Calendar for March

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In Central Texas, March is the beginning of the warm weather gardening season.

In the vegetable garden we can plant green beans, cucumbers, summer squash, watermelons, and cantaloupes by seed. In the second half of the month if the weather is mild, tomato, pepper and eggplant transplants can be placed in the garden. Okra seed can also be planted.

Expect your brussels sprouts, Swiss chard, kale, lettuce, turnips, beets, and carrots to continue producing through the month.

If the weather stays cool it is best to wait to plant the tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and okra after the first of April. If the soil is cold these species will harden off rather than grow. One tactic is to pot up your transplants in one-gallon containers in February or March and only plant them when the weather is warm enough. Fill the container with potting mix fertilized with osmocote. Place the container in full sun out of the wind and be prepared to move them into the house if the temperature falls below 40 degrees for any length of time. The goal is to keep the plants in a fast growth mode until they can be planted in the garden.

March is usually a spectacular blooming period for the cool weather annuals. If your snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, calendula, petunias, and primula, made it through the freezes in January with their foliage in good shape they will bloom again through March, April and into May. If the cyclamen flower buds escaped the freezes, they should also bloom well.

If you have naturalized larkspur in the flower garden, they will grow over the top of everything if left to themselves. I remove all but a few rows of the larkspur. The flowers are pretty and are liked by the hummingbirds, but I want to also be able to enjoy the snapdragons and other blooming plants.

In the wildflower areas verbena, coreopsis, phlox, phacelia, and primrose will be blooming. Bluebonnets will begin blooming in the month.

Zinnias can be planted late in the month for summer cut flowers and butterfly nectar. Look for blooming milkweed, mistflower, and porterweed at the nursery so it can be in place when the Monarchs arrive in April.

Lawns responded to the cold winter temperatures by going dormant. They should start to green up in March but wait until May 1 to fertilize. The roots are not active enough to make efficient use of the nutrients until then. Early in March however apply your pre-emergent herbicides to reduce crabgrass and grass burs in the summer. Make a second application of XL, Dimension, Amaze, or Crabgrass Preventer in Mid-May. Follow the label instructions.

The leaves from most live oaks fall in March. Use the leaves for mulch or as material for the compost pile. They can even be left to decompose on the lawn to help restore organic material. Speed up the decomposition process by mowing the leaves. March is a good time to treat oaks for ball moss. The epiphyte (air plant) does not hurt the tree but if you do not like its looks, use one of the copper

hydroxide products for the treatment. If you prune oaks in March, it is important to paint the wounds to prevent oak wilt.