

## Spring Cleaning

Spring is here! As of March 20, it is officially spring. The weather is here to prove it as well. We are now getting those wonderful spring temperatures that fluctuate from the 70's to 40's. It is a good time to get out and do some things in our landscapes, but be sure not to get ahead of yourself.

It is still too early to start planting most of our vegetables outside. Anytime now, you can start planting those cool season crops such as peas, lettuce, onions, spinach, and parsnip. You can also plant those potatoes at this time too. As long as the ground is dry you can plant them. The other, warm season, vegetables, need to wait to be planted until after the fear of frost is past. Getting those cool season vegetables out into the garden really helps us get out of our cabin fever from the long, cold winter.

At this time a few of our very early spring blooming bulbs should be starting to poke out of the soil. Crocus, squill, and snow drops are the earliest to bloom and sometimes bloom when there is still snow on the ground. These very early spring bloomers are followed by the early spring bloomers such as grape hyacinth, tulips, and daffodils. If you do not have any of these spring bulbs planted in your gardens yet, you should for next spring. The time to plant these spring flowering bulbs is in the fall, typically September through October or when the soil temperatures fall below 60 degrees Fahrenheit. So during this spring and summer, you can start to plan where you will plant them to have a beautiful array of flowers as early as you can in the spring next year.

We need to be cautious of these spring blooming bulbs when we begin our spring clean-up for the year. We can start that any time now by raking up any fallen leaves and other debris that may have gotten into our gardens over the winter. We can also start cutting back our perennials from their fall appearance. This means we can start cutting back the grasses from the winter, which include the tall pampas and maidenhair grasses. These will be cut back to about 6-8 inches or as close to the ground as you can get. We need to get the grasses cut back before the new growth begins to emerge.

Roses can also be pruned back at this time of the year. The best time to prune roses is February to March or in early spring. When you prune your roses, start by removing all the dead, diseased, or damaged branches. If it is a dead or diseased branch, cut back at least one inch below the dead area and above a live bud. If there are no live buds, cut the entire cane out. After that, you should prune out one third of the older branches and canes. Do not cut the rose bush down to more than one third of the original height.

Other types of shrubs can be pruned during the month of April. Things such as honeysuckle, ninebark, barberry, and burning bush should be pruned in the early spring. To prune these types of shrubs, we should cut out the older canes and ones that are dead. As with roses, we need to make sure that we are only cutting out one third of the plant. If it is a plant that blooms in the spring, such as forsythia and lilac, we should wait to prune it until just after it has flowered.

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