

MARCH HORTICULTURE HINTS FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB

OK, now that it is March you can safely trim back most woody and tender bushes to shape them, keep them at desired size and to promote new growth. For azaleas and other spring-blossoming shrubs, wait until they have finished their bloom. Cut back your roses now, even if they have bloomed all winter.

Now is a good time to plant almost any tree, shrub or perennial or warm season annual. Veggies started from seed can be set out by mid-month in most places. The latest freeze I've had in eastern Citrus County was St. Patrick's day – March 17. You know your own yard's micro climate best.

If it remains on the dry side, remember to water new plantings every day to get them started, then drop back to every other day, then twice a week and once a week until we get regular summer rains. If we don't get a whole inch in a week, you have to supplement that rainfall with hand watering or automatic sprinklers until those new plants are well established. After they are established, one deep watering is much better than a light sprinkle. Pots that were fine all winter with one or two drinks a week will need more now.

The winter rye will last in the yard for another month or more, but the warm-season grasses like St. Augustine and Bahia will start to seriously grow again soon. Seems like everyone has weeds in the grass; lots of them flourish during the cool season. However, others get back in gear with the warming days. Now is a good time to weed and feed the grass in the lawn. If you don't mind the weeds, just feed the grass. Be careful if you live near the water to keep your fertilizer out of the lake/pond/river. If there is a deluge forecast, wait until that has passed to fertilize, then water just enough to get it off the blades of grass.

Keep working on tending the plants you have divided, or made cuttings for the plant sale. Kathy has worked extra hard to make this a great fundraiser. Come refurbish your plantings with nice plants from the sale.

We just started an experiment with blueberries. We had to remove an oak tree which left the ferns and azaleas in full sun. So the azaleas moved to more shady spots in the yard and we brought in several loads of tiny pine bark mulch in which to plant the berry bushes. They should be ready to bear fruit in a year or maybe two. We planted Jewel and Emerald varieties (like Ferris Farms).

Lettuce and collards are the only remaining veggies from my winter garden. I'm itching to start tomatoes, peppers and green beans. Okra and eggplant start later. I have lots of garden space inside my pool screen so that is reserved for plants that don't need bees and those that the bunnies and squirrels tend to munch. The outdoor space (needed for pollinators to do their work) for squash, zucchini and cucumbers is limited in my garden so those are not high on my list, but they can be on yours.