

# Horticulture Hints

*The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul. — Alfred Austin*

March 2022

Spring isn't even official yet, and we've got temperatures in the 80's. If I had known, I would have started my tomato seeds in November! Next year, for sure....

I seem to have ghosts in my garden area. The birds and squirrels forced me to invest in a large roll of floating row cover material. If you've never worked with this miracle of modern technology, floating row covers are



'Ghosts'

made of spun or woven polyester or polypropylene material that lays loosely on the plants, or is suspended above the plants through the use of wire or PVC hoops built for support. This fabric can extend growing seasons by allowing vegetables to be put out in the garden up to two weeks early. The temperature at night can be 3-5 degrees warmer than the outside temperature. Light weight fabric can protect from light frost (30 degrees F) and medium and heavy weight cloth can protect from frost down to 24 degrees F. It can also protect your veggies from insects and other critters (like squirrels

and birds!). Edges of the cloth are sealed by tucking under, and securing with rocks, soil or metal staples. The metal staples, however, have the potential to rip the fabric, especially in a high wind. BTW, the reason the ugly, broken bamboo tomato cages are still around is because bees are using the cut ends in which to lay their eggs. I can't bring myself to burn them if there's a possibility of a baby bee still in there. They'll probably hang around until the bees refuse to use them.

According to the two-week forecast, we may be done with the freezing weather. Two



Seedlings started in peat pellets

weeks brings us to March 19, which is past the 'last-frost-date' for our area. Cool season vegetable planting time is over, and now is the time to concentrate on getting those warm season things in dirt, either started indoors, or directly in the garden itself. March is actually a critical month, and many warm season crops can (or, quite possibly, *should*) be planted early, because spring weather often goes from cool to hot in a very short amount of time. And we've already been

unseasonably hot, so if you are planning to do summer veggies, don't delay any longer. I've been outside for at least several hours every day, Emma in tow. She's as exhausted at the end of that time as I am. I've got beans, peas and carrots in, with tomatoes, peppers, and okra waiting in pots. As soon as the soil is refurbished, they'll be in the ground.

You can also start watering and fertilizing your lawn. If weeds are a problem in your lawn, now is the time to use a weed-and-feed product. If you choose this route, don't fertilize as well, since the weed-and-feed does it all. And if you wish to put in a new lawn, now is a great time to do it. Your new grass will have time to develop its roots before the really hot weather comes around.

March is the time to give all your plantings their spring feeding. Established plantings should be fertilized in March, June and September. Fertilize new plantings at initial planting, then lightly (at half the package-recommended rate) every six to eight weeks from March through September. Apply a well-balanced fertilizer (6-6-6 or 8-8-8), or one slightly higher in nitrogen (that's the first

number, as in 10-6-6 or 12-8-8). Nitrogen helps your plant have green healthy foliage. If you use a slow-release fertilizer (Osmocote, for example), the little balls will continue to feed your plants over a period of several months. Try to find one that has micro nutrients, as well, since the three numbers indicated aren't all that the plant needs. Like us, they need tiny amounts of many different things. Keep in mind, though, that a large amount of rain, or a heavy rain (if we ever get any rain at all, that is!) can change the rate of release of the fertilizer. Monitor your plants - if they show signs of yellowing or reduced rates of growth, additional feedings may be necessary. For blooming plants, you can use bone meal as a part of your feeding regimen, but it's not a complete feeding product. Bone meal is high in potassium (the second number on the fertilizer rating), and potassium is good for helping the plant have bigger, healthier blooms. Just remember to use it as a supplement to your balanced fertilizer.

**Don't forget the plant sale on March 26th!**  
**Get your homegrown together for Janie!**  
Happy spring & happy gardening!