

## What to Do in the Garden In March

By Patricia Dumas

It's starting. You feel that little wisp of warmth in the air. Maybe you smell the grass growing and the warmed earth. A warm day makes you want to plant everything. Then the cold comes back. Then the warmth arrives again. What's a gardener to do? You'll find that most of your perennial plants coming back can take quite a bit of cold and temperature fluctuation.

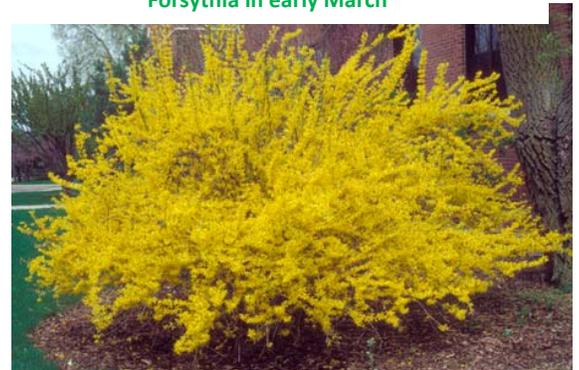


Perennials are *made* for the cold. And made to last for years in the ground.

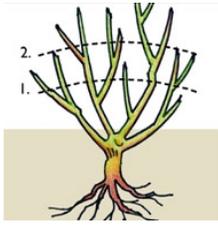
Daffodils, Tulips and late crocus are shoving their way out. Green grass starts to show its head, and it's the best time to get out there in the garden and clean up and inspect.

- 
- Don't wait to clean up your garden. Removing leaf debris, sticks, and dead plants early will cut down on the amount of work you will have in beautiful May, and extinguish a lot of fungus and bacteria that is harbored over from last season. There's less of a chance of trampling emerging shoots in the garden if you get in early and clean up the mess before they pop up.
  - Cut off the ratty-looking foliage that has overwintered on your perennials. Most perennials (except hydrangea and the shrubs that grow flowers on OLD wood) can be cut down to the ground. This includes the enormous Montauk Daisy mess that has overstayed its welcome. They need the pruning and will grow stronger without all the flopping the following autumn.

Forsythia in early March



- When the forsythia bloom, that's the time to cut back your roses. Most of the roses we grow now are new roses—ones that re-bloom all summer long like the English Roses from David Austin. A good pruning to about 1 foot above the ground will keep them in shape and produce healthier stems and more flowers. The old roses you may have in your yard (one time bloomers) need to be cut back in the summer AFTER they bloom. They bloom on wood grown the previous summer.



David Austin English  
Roses Pruning Guide  
<http://www.davidaustinroses.com>

- If you've left dried leaves over your plants like I do, start removing that and old mulch from your plants. It lets the ground breath, and deters bacteria.

- The absolute best thing you can do in your spring garden is put down new mulch. Products like Licorice Mulch are great mulches that preserve soil moisture, regulate the temperature of the soil, and encourage beneficial earthworms that bring healthy mulch deep underground to keep the soil supple and fertile.

- Prune, Prune, Prune! Forsythia can be pruned right after it blooms. You'll have bigger and bushier shrubs. Cut down your Butterfly Bushes (Buddleia). The harder (lower) you prune them, the healthier and bigger they grow. And grow they will: A summer season can bring almost 5-6 feet of new growth. You'll find the flower is bigger too if you prune. Please feel free to come on in and talk to us about your individual pruning needs.



Pruned Buddleia in March  
( Butterfly Bush)

- Plant your perennials! Sickles Market sells hardened off (cold hardy) perennials grown in the best conditions. They come up in the cold, and they can be planted in the cold as well. They get established quicker, and can withstand the summer heat better.

- March is really the best time to plant your greens! Lettuce, and greens like Arugula, Radicchio, and Spinach love growing in cool weather, and are less likely to bolt (seed heads popping) when the heat comes in.



Pussy Willow in late Winter

- Time to plant some flower seeds! Since we always get little volunteer seedlings that overwinter from our dropped flowers, seeds like marigolds and cosmos can be planted early. They'll bloom earlier too.

- Cut back pussy willow NOW—after the catkins fade to yellow flowers. Pussy Willow pops its soft buds in February, and needs a full summer season to grow new branches.
- Start acclimating your tropical trees and bushes that have been overwintered. Put outside in a protected area on a sunny warm day, and bring back inside when it turns cold again.
- There's a good chance of getting a wicked snowstorm in March. Don't worry, most flowers and plants find good protection under the insulating effects of snow, and will spring back to life after the snow melts.

**Remember to come on in and ask us about your new Spring garden!  
We love answering gardening questions!**

**Happy New Spring!**