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Desert Garden Calendar Monthly **DO** List

MARCH

Even though it is warmer in the Valley in March, we can still have an occasional frost. Don't forget that weather forecasts are generally quoted from Sky Harbor International Airport, and many of the outlying parts of the Valley can be up to 10°F colder than that at night. Be prepared to cover tender plants if we have some chilly nights.

With warm weather, expect to see more aphids on vegetables, shrubs, fruit and shade trees. The best control is natural predators such as ladybugs or praying mantids. If these are unavailable, there are several insecticides to do the job.



Grass

Ryegrass should be watered about once or twice a week depending on the weather. Bermuda grass needs water about once a month. Lay down Bermuda sod, if applicable. Spray weeds now, or they will be problematic later. In desert rock areas Bermuda grass weeds can be controlled with pre-emergence herbicides.

Trees/Shrubs

Prune back hedges and shrubs that have become overgrown and dense. Fertilize deciduous fruit trees with nitrogen when they leaf out. Thin deciduous fruit to 6 inch spacing. The earlier this is done after fruit set, the more size response will be expected in fruit remaining on the tree. While pruning frost damaged plants, wait and prune after new growth has started. Prune frost sensitive citrus after mid-March, after they begin to leaf out with new spring growth.

Now is the time to plant trees and shrubs, including citrus trees. The earlier you get them in the ground, the more time the plants will have to get their roots established before the hot weather starts sucking the moisture out of the leaves. Two to five year old citrus trees transplant most successfully. Larger, older trees are more costly, harder to transplant, and suffer more from transplant shock. It will generally be three years after transplant before fruit production and that is the same whether you plant a 2 year old tree or a 10 year old tree.

Flowers

Prepare flower beds for spring gardens. Keep spent blooms from winter annuals picked off. Fertilize flowers with a fertilizer high in nitrogen and phosphorus.

Vegetables

Plant seeds: beans (lima and snap), beets, carrots, corn, cucumbers, jicama, melons (cantaloupe, muskmelon, watermelon), okra, green onions, peanuts, pumpkins, radishes, squash & sunflowers. Plant transplants: artichokes, eggplant, peppers & tomatoes. Cut back old and dead growth in the herb garden. Herbs to plant are mint, parsley, rosemary, sage and thyme. Prepare your soil for a spring/summer garden. Organic matter, mulch, manure, or compost is very important. Fertilize producing vegetable gardens.

Monthly **DON'T** list for March

1. *When pruning never remove more than 1/4 of the total plant. Always use sharp, sterile, quality pruning tools and disinfect them between cuts to prevent the spread of disease.*
2. *Don't cheat on soil preparation for flowers and vegetables.*
3. *Don't fertilize dormant Bermuda grass until late April or May.*
4. *Don't plant roses with western exposure because of the afternoon summer heat.*
5. *Water both the day before and immediately after applying granular fertilizers.*
6. *Don't fertilize mature trees near the trunk. Fertilize the outer two thirds of the ground of the leaf canopy where the most active roots are.*
7. *Don't water grass at night when the temperatures are coolest as this fosters the growth of fungal diseases.*
8. *Don't mow when grass is wet. This also may result in fungal disease.*
9. *Don't delay on weed control. Handle weeds while they are young, tender, & their roots are manageable, or before they sprout.*
10. *Don't use a pre-emergent in an area where you are going to plant veggies and flowers from seed. It will prevent seeds from germination,. It will not affect transplants.*
11. *If you are growing a lawn from new seed, don't plant now. Wait until April or May.*