

# Garden Club Horticultural Hints March 2021

*Spring really is just around the corner!*

Envision spring 2022 even as you enjoy 2021. Take a walk around your yard (staying off muddy ground) and enjoy the earliest flowers. Witch hazels (*Hamamelis*) are in bloom and cornelian dogwood (*Cornus mas*) are close behind. As snow cover gives way, look for hellebore blooms to put in an appearance along with the early bulbs such as snowdrops, Siberian squills and crocus. Don't have any planted bulbs or early shrubs? Make notes on where they would look great (and where the snow melts more quickly), take photos of the best sites, and tag them so you don't forget where to plant this autumn for the spring of 2022.



When your spring bulbs appear, sprinkle a small amount of organic fertilizer and lime around - not on - the new greens. This will wash into the soil with spring rains and help the bulb get ready for next year's flowers. This year's flower is already in the bulb, waiting for the right weather to appear. An application of organic mulch around the foliage will keep weeds down around the bulbs and add organic to the soil later. If you planted your bulbs among perennials, (good for hiding the bulb foliage as it dies) do not mulch until the perennials are up.

*Crocuses are one of the first tangible signs of spring. But if you think they're just for our visual enjoyment, look more closely: these crocuses have already attracted dozens of native bees!*



With more sunlight coming in the windows, your houseplants should be waking up. If you haven't already, begin fertilizing lightly to feed the new growth. Don't forget to keep the humidity up with misting or pebble trays—our homes remain very dry as long as the heating systems are on. Trim off any ragged or weary leaves – the plant will look better immediately and the new leaves will have room and light to grow.

There is more to gardening than plants. Use these cold and wet days to spruce up outdoor furniture—sand and refinish wood, remove rust and repaint metal. If your refurbishing work cries out for new fabric for the cushions, you'll be glad you did it when you are ready to use them in the warm months.





**Give your houseplants room to grow.** Not every day is good for outdoor gardening, so now is a good time to do some work indoors. Transplant houseplants in March to prepare them for a spring growth spurt. Always use a clean pot. Scrub salt and dirt from old pots and rinse out new pots before using. Remember to never put a plant into a pot more than one size larger than its current pot. Otherwise, it will disappoint you by spending more energy growing underground than up top. Prune dead or circling roots to encourage new ones to form. Always remove dead leaves, old flowers, and any salt that have built up around the stem of the plant or on top of the soil. And don't forget to wash the leaves to remove dust from them. Finally, water thoroughly but do not let the pot sit in the water that has drained through.

*Salt tends to build up on the stems of houseplants, as well as on top of the soil. It needs to be removed now if the plant is to be healthy for the new growing year,*

Do you have early-season weeds popping up in your vegetable or flower garden? Spread newspapers or cardboard (not shiny or glossy paper!) over your bed now and weigh down with rocks. Remove the material when the soil has warmed enough to start planting, and you will have eliminated weeding those beds from your spring chores.

*Read the seed packages before starting vegetables indoors. Leggy seedlings will require more work on your part when transplanted to the garden.*



The ground may still be frozen, but planning your 2021 garden should be well underway. If your flower and vegetable seed order hasn't been sent in, do it quickly. When they arrive, check seeds packets for advice on when to start each variety of seed. Starting them too early often leads to leggy or weak seedlings from having spent too long waiting indoors for warm weather to arrive. Use only sterile soil mixes to prevent damping off (fungal growth) on seedlings.

*Save those Amazon boxes, grocery store paper bags, and newspapers. They'll help eliminate weeding, and they'll compost back to their component cellulose.*

*Written and created by Betty Sanders. For more horticultural suggestions for March and throughout the year, please visit [www.BettyOnGardening.com](http://www.BettyOnGardening.com)*