

## The Garden in Early Spring

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### The Garden in Early Spring

The days lengthen, daffodils abound, buds burst, plants unfurl and blossom appears on the trees. There is interesting activity in the pond. At this time I always wish I'd planted more bulbs last autumn and vow to get it right for next year. My favourites for March are the small blue and white Chinodoxa luciliae.

Though the weather in March is not likely to be extreme, anything is possible from snow to warm sun. The biggest problems for new tender growth are frost and wind. The beautiful flowers of spring shrubs such as Camellia and Magnolia, may be damaged not so much by the frost itself, but by a sudden thaw caused by the early morning sun.



This causes the cells to rupture and the petals to discolour. For this reason early flowering shrubs are better planted facing west, allowing the frost to melt and evaporate at a less damaging rate.

The other big problem for tender new shoots is strong biting easterly winds. Easterly winds tend to dry and often scorch new growth. This may not be apparent for a couple of weeks but the chances are that distortions on new growth, or brown patches at the ends of

leaves, will be due to a strong easterly. Fleece is probably the best protection during these spells but do peg it down securely.

March notes  
Planting

Still time to plant bare rooted shrubs, which are often much cheaper than container grown ones.

Lawns

At this time of the year the chances are that the lawn is not looking its best.

Give it a fairly high cut, then scarify. Scarifying removes the dead grass or thatch and moss. This is best done with a powered scarifier or by a man with calloused hands, as it's hard work using a wire lawn rake. It

is quite amazing how much debris can be removed. The lawn will look even worse after this treatment but it will soon make a good recovery.

Any compacted areas need to be spiked with a fork. This too is hard work, but well worth the effort.

Brush in sharp sand mixed with a little grass seed.

It is also worth re shaping the edges of the lawn with a half moon edger. A clear definition to the edge of the lawn makes a big difference to the general appearance of the garden. Slugs and snails enjoy lurking in unclipped grass at the edge of a lawn. The fewer places they have to hide in close proximity to the borders the better!

Weeding and feeding is probably best left until April.

Pruning roses  
There is much debate about both how and when to prune roses.

If you haven't done so already, now is the time to prune all types providing frost is not forecast. Generally speaking you can't go far

wrong if you remove the 3 D's. Dead - Diseased - Damaged, followed by the weak and crossing stems. Apart from climbers and ramblers, cut down the remaining stems by about a third.

When pruning anything always cut to either a bud or a branch.

Other Shrubs

As a guide, if a flowering shrub flowers in the second half of the year, cut it back now to encourage strong new growth which will bear flowers. If it flowers in the first half of the year cut it back after flowering.

Kitchen Garden

Time to sow main crop potatoes, tomatoes and onions and other early veg.

Interesting facts

Plants Improve Air Quality

A large tree can remove 20 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equalling 11,000 miles of

car emissions. Landscape plants, including shrubs and turf, remove smoke, dust, and other pollutants from the air. One study showed that 1 acre of trees has the ability to remove 13 tons of particles and gases annually.

Worms

A 200 sq. ft. garden with a low worm population of only 5 worms per cubic foot will be provided with over 35 lbs (about 1/3 lb per worm) of top-grade fertilizer by the worms, each garden year.

Tree Facts

The tallest tree in the world is a redwood in California - it is 112m (367ft) tall. The oldest living tree in the world is another redwood in California which is 12,000 years old. The oldest tree in Britain is a mere youngster at approximately 4,000 years old (the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire).

Enjoy your gardening



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