

President's Message:

The old adage for the month of March, in like a lion out like a lamb, has certainly lived up to the first part of the saying..... And now it's beginning to look a lot like spring time every where you go. The sun feels so good and is a welcome respite from the winter of record rain and snow fall.

We extend that warm welcome to Jim Skidmore who is a garden club member and will be our speaker today on dahlias. I'm really excited about the program.

Our spring garden tour is next month and so many members have already been busy to help make it a success. A special thanks to all of those involved with the home procurement and to Maria Hackney for her time and effort on the map for our tickets. Thanks are in order for Alma Kollmann and Joyce Hambley for the docent list, Eileen Weller and Lynette Figueroa for contacting artists musicians and vendors. Thank you to Joey Fultz who has already visited our host home and began preparations for refreshments. I applaud and appreciate those Committee members still working to ensure a successful tour.

I became a member of the Merced garden club because of the garden tour. Our home was on tour a few years ago and the members on the pre-tour were so friendly, kind and helpful I was really impressed! As a docent you have the opportunity to project to the public and energetic and positive persona that embraces the heart of our garden club. We are a diverse, intelligent, inclusive, creative and fun group of individuals. Let your light shine as we celebrate and welcome our guests on April 12th to our 21st Merced garden club tour. Let's all pray/hope/ wish for a beautiful sunny day! Love always, Patty



Gardening Quote: I know that if odor were visible, as color is,
I'd see the summer garden in rainbow clouds.
~Robert Bridges, "Testament of Beauty"

10 Essential Spring Gardening Tips

<http://www.marthastewart.com/270176/spring-gardening-tips>

1. Survey the Yard

Make note of tree limbs that should be removed or cabled, especially those that overhang structures. Hire an arborist to maintain large trees. Cut down last year's perennial foliage, and toss it into the compost pile. Rake mulch from beds planted with bulbs before foliage appears, and refresh mulch in other planting areas after soil warms. Check fences, steps, and pathways for disrepair caused by freezing and thawing.

2. Order Tools and Plants

Tune up tools so everything is ready when things start growing. Make note of what is missing, and order tools for the new growing season. Choose new plants for the garden. Order perennials, trees, and shrubs for spring planting.

3. Get Ready to Mow

Send the mower and leaf blower for servicing, or if you have the right tools, sharpen the mower blades yourself. Refill your mower with oil, install fresh spark plugs, and lubricate moving parts if necessary. Clear the lawn of winter debris, and look for areas that need reseeding before mowing.

4. Prune Trees and Shrubs

Remove dead, damaged, and diseased branches from woody plants. Thin and trim summer-blooming shrubs such as butterfly bush, hydrangea, and most roses, except for old-fashioned once bloomers. Prune cold-damaged wood after plants resume spring growth. Prune spring-blooming shrubs and trees after flowering.

5. Take a Soil Test

Check soil pH with a home soil- test kit, taking several samples from different planting areas for an accurate reading. Enrich soil as necessary: Add dolomite lime to raise the pH or elemental sulfur to lower the pH.

6. Prepare New Beds

Clear the planting area as soon as soil can be worked, removing sod or weeds and debris. Spread a 4-inch layer of compost or well-rotted manure and any amendments over soil, and cultivate it to a depth of 10 to 12 inches with a spading fork.

7. Plant

Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, and perennials such as hostas and daylilies by early spring. Choose a cool, cloudy day if possible. Transplant container-grown plants anytime during the growing season except midsummer; be sure to water them thoroughly. Sow seeds of cool-season flowers like sweet peas, poppies, and calendula, and vegetables such as lettuce, parsley, and spinach.

8. Fertilize

Apply balanced fertilizer (6-6-6 or 8-8-8), fish emulsion, or other soil amendments recommended by soil-test results around trees and shrubs when new growth appears. Spread high-acid fertilizer and pine-needle mulch around acid-loving shrubs like azaleas and camellias. Begin fertilizing perennials when active growth resumes.

9. Start a Compost Pile

Start a compost pile, or use a compost bin, if you don't have one already. Begin by collecting plant debris and leaves raked up from the garden. Chop these up first to speed decomposition. Add equal amounts "brown" (carbon-rich) materials like dried leaves and straw and "green" (nitrogen-rich) materials like grass clippings and weeds in even layers with water and a compost bioactivator. Turn regularly. Continue adding to the pile throughout the season for rich, homemade compost next spring.

10. Clean Bird Feeders and Baths

Disinfect the feeders by scrubbing with weak bleach solution (1/4 cup bleach: 2 gallons warm water). Rinse and dry the feeders thoroughly before refilling them. Scrub birdbaths with bleach solution, then rinse them thoroughly and refill, changing water weekly. Clean birdbaths and feeders regularly throughout the season.

Gardening jokes

What do you call a stolen yam?
A hot potato.

"A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows."
- Doug Larson

Everyone has these on their face?
Tulips

"I have no plants in my house. They won't live for me. Some of them don't even wait to die, they commit suicide."
- Jerry Seinfeld

Why did the horse go behind the tree?
To change his jockeys.

What vegetable can tie your stomach in knots?
String beans.

"What did the carrot say to the wheat?
Lettuce rest, I'm feeling beet."
- Shel Silverster