

## March Gardening Tips

Preparation is the key word for March gardening. Clean out matted leaves and other dead vegetation from your gardens and lawns. "Fluff" the mulch, allowing air and light to penetrate the soil, and to relieve compaction. By doing this you may not have to apply new mulch this year.



Growing up on eastern Long Island, when it was still mostly and agricultural area, I remember hearing that St. Patrick's Day is the traditional time to plant peas. However, with all the rain and snow we've had this year, you might have to wait for the ground to dry some.

Dell Sadler is recommending a new item on the market - pelletized compost. It provides the same nutrients for the soil without the mess and sometimes odor.

If you are going to start any plants from seeds, now it the time to do it. Remember, moonvine seeds should be soaked overnight then nick the outer skin of the seed.

I'm not sure if any of the professionals would tell you to do this, but I just cut all the berries off my nandinas (yes, I am one of those evil gardeners who still have and love my nandinas). Logic tells me that the fewer berries to drop on the ground, the fewer seedlings I will have to weed out later.

February was the time for cutting back many of your bushes, but Mother Nature prevented most of us from staying on schedule. So, as soon as possible, get out and cut back your roses, butterfly bushes, sweet autumn clematis, loriope, nandinas and any other **summer blooming** shrubs (not hydrangeas!)

To perk up your early spring gardens, try adding some hardy annuals such as pansies - though I highly recommend planting these in the fall. They'll carry you through until it's warm enough for the summer annuals.

I recommend getting this month's issue of *The Herb Companion*. They feature dill (the herb of the year) with many fascinating facts and great recipes. Also are wonderful ideas for gardening with herbs as ground covers, new varieties for sale, and many other helpful facts. Here's one I'll share with you - remember "preparation is the key word for March gardening tools - give them a thorough cleaning. Make sure they are in good condition, sharpened and rust-free (knife/tools/scissor sharpening at JoAnn's Fabrics - March 17). Also, wash plastic pots in a large tub with a 10% bleach solution.



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