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If you need this newsletter in alternative format, please contact Jennifer Schutter at the Adair County Extension Center.

## GETTING READY FOR SPRING GARDENING

As the weather warms, gardeners are anxious to work in their garden and prepare for spring planting. But, don't get in too big of a hurry. We all like a nice 70 degree day in February like we had on February 20<sup>th</sup>, but we must remember that winter is not over yet. We could still have another snow storm or two, but let's hope not.

Raised beds and containers can be prepared now for planting. Add soil, potting mix and compost to raise the soil level to where it needs to be. Wet gardens should dry out first before working up the soil. Soil structure can be damaged if it is worked too soon. In late March in northern Missouri, mid-March in south Missouri, begin planting cool-season vegetable seed like spinach, lettuce, kale and other greens. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and kohlrabi transplants should be planted in the garden the last week of March if you live in the northern half of the state, and mid-March if you live in the southern half. Other cool-season vegetables and herbs like beets, carrots, Swiss chard, peas and cilantro, and crops like potatoes and onions should also be planted in March or early April. Use a trellis if growing snow peas or sugar snap peas. They need something to grow on. Snow peas/sugar snap peas are the peas in which you eat the entire pod before the seeds inside begin bulging out.

This year try something new. Last season I grew 'Graffiti' purple cauliflower that produced a beautiful head in early June. Purple potatoes are becoming more popular among home gardeners and can now be found in local garden centers. Decide how much you want to grow. I grow enough to freeze approximately 30 bags of spinach, 15 bags of broccoli and 8 bags of peas. I also freeze cilantro and beets and early season fruits like strawberries, mulberries, raspberries, rhubarb and gooseberries. I pick lambsquarter in early spring and freeze it for later use. Considered a weed, it is a healthy edible green that tastes similar to spinach.

As weeds start to grow in the garden, remove them while their roots are shallow and easy to pull. Chickweed and henbit are two of the earliest weeds to emerge in the garden and flower bed. Pre-emergent herbicides in granular form such as PREEN, can be used for control and are available at local garden centers. Organic PREEN should be used when vegetables are up and growing. Do not apply non-organic PREEN containing the active ingredient Trifluralin, around edible plants.

If you didn't get your pruning done in February, you still have time. Prune fruit and ornamental trees now if you have not already done so. Small fruits like grapevines, blackberries and raspberries should also be pruned.

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Most fruit plants need annual pruning to be productive. Early spring is also the time to fertilize small fruits and fruit trees. Take the wrap off young trees protected from Southwest Injury. Leaving it on the tree can damage the trunk by allowing insects and rain to get inside of it.

Even though the days are getting warmer, mulch should not be removed from perennials yet. Roses should not be pruned until temperatures are reliably warm. April 15 is the rule of thumb for pruning hybrid tea roses in northern Missouri. Wait to uncover strawberry plants until early April. If uncovered too soon, you may experience crop loss due to freezing night temperatures. Before you uncover any plants, make sure the temperature is not going to drop below freezing.

By March, the days are longer, the weather is warmer, green grass appears, baby animals are born and chickens start laying eggs again. Daffodils and crocus typically make their appearance by mid to late March in northern Missouri, and early flowering shrubs like forsythias start blooming. My sister in southern Missouri, had daffodils up on February 19. Serviceberry will be the first white flowering trees to bloom in wooded areas and often in fence lines. Followed later by redbuds, crabapples and dogwoods.

One of the first things to do in a lawn this spring is a winter cleanup. Rake the lawn to get rid of dead growth, leaves, twigs and winter debris. This lets light and air to the soil level, encouraging grass to grow. If your mower blades need sharpened or your mower or tiller need a tune-up, get this done right away. If you plan to take the mower or tiller to a garden center to be worked on, plan on several weeks before getting it back possibly, as most people wait until they need it to have it worked on. Start preparing other tools for planting. If you didn't already do it, tighten any loose screws, remove rust, and apply oil to the wood handles for protection from the elements. Taking proper care of tools will make them last a long time.

Plan now for a cool-season garden. Prepare beds and containers. Decide what you want to grow and purchase seed and transplants. Begin planting later in the month and enjoy the harvest sometime around mid-May.

## 'GRAFFITI' CAULIFLOWER

'Graffiti' is harvested 80 days from setting out transplants. Easily the darkest and "truest" of the purple cauliflowers, Graffiti is here to brighten the plate and jazz up the vegetable patch! This widely adapted, vigorous variety sets large heads of deep purple that keep their color even after cooking (reaching a shade of mauve). Perfect for coastal climates, the far north, and the humidity-laden south and southwest, it's both a gourmet selection and a tried-and-true dependable performer in the garden.

These heavy, well-packed heads intensify their shade of violet with exposure to sun, and need less wrapper protection than most others. They make a splendid fall crop, but are also suitable for spring. Highly resistant to downy mildew, they can withstand rainy and humid climates far easier than older varieties. And they just look spectacular!

'Graffiti' can be steamed, sautéed, or lightly boiled. It may become a bit less intense, but won't lose its essential purple hues! To keep the color even stronger, add a dollop of lemon juice or vinegar to the pot before cooking!

**Story Source:** Park Seed, <http://parkseed.com/graffiti-hybrid-cauliflower-seeds/p/05095-PK-P1/>

## MISSOURI CENTURY FARMS

The Missouri Century Farm program's history dates back to 1976 as a result of the Missouri Committee for Agriculture that was co-chaired by James B. Boillot, Director, Missouri Department of Agriculture and Elmer R. Kiehl, Dean of the College of Agriculture, University of Missouri. The committee's purpose was to organize the American Revolution Bicentennial celebration in Missouri. One activity initiated by the committee was the "Centennial Farm" project, which awarded certificates to persons owning farms that had been in the same family for 100 years or more. This program has sustained as a yearly event with over 100 farms recognized each year. In 2008, the Missouri Farm Bureau became a program co-sponsor.

Century farms and ranches have shaped the nation. Amidst every kitchen, behind every faded barn door, and in every soiled and calloused hand lie untold stories of those who feed our nation. As an industry, we are called to discover these stories and share with consumers everywhere the contribution farmers and ranchers have made to our American heritage. It is time to redefine sustainability and put a face to the farmer who fills our cupboards and clothes our backs.

Get the application at <http://extension.missouri.edu/centuryfarm/>.

## **SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP MARCH 4 IN KIRKSVILLE**

A soil health workshop will be held Friday, March 4 at Missouri Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office, Kirksville. The morning session is for landowners/farmers and will be held from 9am until 12 pm. A session for homeowners and home gardeners will be held from 1-4 pm.

If you want to learn more about sustainable gardening practices, this workshop is for you. I have been gardening more sustainably for several years now and I can see the benefits! Plan to attend and learn more about good homeowner and household practices for water and soil quality (what you put down your sink and toilet or set out on the curb, etc.), good practices for managing landscapes, lawns, wells, septic systems, household trash and waste, home and yard chemicals, etc. Sustainable gardening practices will be discussed.

Speakers from Natural Resource Conservation Service, Adair County Soil and Water Conservation District, Kirksville Public Works Department and University of Missouri Extension will be presenting.

To register call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866. Light refreshments will be provided. There is no cost to attend. The workshop is sponsored by the Adair County Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service and University of Missouri Extension.



Daylight Saving Time begins March 13

*Happy Easter!*



## **PRETTY WHITE-BLOSSOMED PEAR TREE USED IN LANDSCAPING HAS AN UNWANTED, INVASIVE SIDE**

With angelic white blossoms that transform the spring landscape, flamboyant foliage in fall and abilities to tolerate air pollution and resist disease, the Bradford pear became a favorite choice in commercial and home landscapes. However, this beauty has a nightmarish side. "People ask, 'What is the beautiful tree that is blooming along the interstate or along Highway 60?'" said Patrick Byers, horticulture specialist with MU Extension. "In warmer southern states, like Arkansas and southern Missouri, the tree is now considered an invasive species."

The tree, one of several cultivars of the Callery pear, was brought to the west from China in the late 1800s as a small ornamental. Over the years, more cultivars of the pear were developed with an eye toward strengthening its weak branch structure. The breeding also moved the pear away from being a non-fruiting tree that was cloned for sale in the trade, to being one that produced lots of fruit and lots of seed. The tree can spread both by seeds and vegetatively through sprouts from the base. The

tree's white blossoms are now abundant in any place where the sun shines—parks, highway rights of way, vacant lots, even areas under partially open forest canopies.

The same toughness that made it such a good choice in heavily trafficked landscapes, also makes the pear an aggressive spreader that can quickly crowd out native species. Once the darling of the landscaping trade, this tree has escaped cultivation and is considered an invasive species. "This widespread invasion creates problems for farmers, ranchers, or anyone managing acreage," Byers said. "The invasive plants are very difficult to control. Mowing them, if you don't pick up a thorn that will blow your tires, only creates more sprouts from the base." Girdling of mature trees can be an effective control. Herbicides can also be effective.

The Missouri Department of Conversation has additional information on this problem online at <http://mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/resources/2012/05/callerypearinvasive.pdf>.

# GARDENING TIPS FOR MARCH

## VEGETABLES ALL MONTH:

- Fertilize the garden as the soil is being prepared for planting. Unless directed otherwise by a soil test, 1-2 pounds of 12-12-12 or an equivalent fertilizer per 100 square feet is usually sufficient.
- Cultivate weeds and remove old, dead stalks of last years' growth from the asparagus bed before new spears emerge.
- Asparagus and rhubarb roots should be planted as soon as the ground can be worked.
- Plant peas, lettuce, radishes, mustard greens, turnips, Irish potatoes, spinach, and onions (seeds and sets) outdoors.
- Plant beets, carrots, parsley, and parsnip seeds outdoors. Set out broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, and cauliflower transplants into the garden.
- Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants indoors.

## ORNAMENTALS:

- To control Iris borer, clean up and destroy old foliage before new growth begins.
- Fertilize bulbs with a "bulb booster" formulation broadcast over the planting beds.
- Loosen winter mulches from perennials cautiously.
- Dormant mail order plants should be unwrapped immediately. Keep roots from drying out.
- Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor's buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- Heavy pruning of trees should be complete before growth occurs. Trees should not be pruned while the new leaves are growing.
- Summer and fall blooming perennials should be divided in spring.
- Apply sulfur to the soils around acid-loving plants such as Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Hollies, and Dogwoods. Use a granular formulation at the rate of ½ pound per 100 square feet.
- Apply a fertilizer such as 6-12-12 to perennial beds when new growth appears.
- Spring bedding plants such as pansies and toadflax may be planted now.
- Ornamental grasses should be cut to the ground as new growth begins.
- Gradually start to pull back mulch from rose bushes.

## FRUITS:

- Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as the weather warms.
- Continue pruning grapes. Bleeding causes no injury to the vines.
- Continue pruning apple trees. Burn or destroy prunings to minimize insect or disease occurrence.
- Apply dormant oil sprays on a dry day when freezing temperatures are not expected.
- Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl disease.
- Aphids begin to hatch on fruit trees as the buds begin to open.
- Peaches and nectarines should be pruned just before they bloom.

## LAWN AND TURF:

- Mow lawns low to remove old growth before new growth begins.
- Apply controls for wild garlic. It will take several years of annual applications for complete control.
- Apply broadleaf herbicides now for control of cool-season perennial and annual weeds. These must not be applied to areas that will be seeded soon.
- Thin spots and bare patches in the lawn can be over-seeded now.

**Source: Missouri Botanical Garden**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 4: Soil Health Workshop**, Missouri Department of Conservation NE Regional Office, Kirksville. See article on page 3 for more details.

**March 22: Pruning class**, Monroe City High School library, 6:30-8:00 pm. The class will cover how to prune shade trees, fruit trees and shrubs. If a tree needing pruning can be found, there will be a pruning demonstration. Please pre-register by contacting [kbrandt@monroe.k12.mo.us](mailto:kbrandt@monroe.k12.mo.us) or to 573-735-4626 ext.25.

**March 30: Lewis County Women In Ag workshop**, Queen of Peace Church Hall, Ewing, MO. Topics: Conservation Update; FSA programs; The Marketing and Labeling of Our Food-Nutrition at a Glance; Landscaping Tips; Therapeutic Effects of Humor; and The Scoop on Soil Test and the Dirt You Need to Know. RSVP to Lewis County Extension at 573-767-5273 or [ArnoldBr@missouri.edu](mailto:ArnoldBr@missouri.edu). Complimentary meal provided courtesy of the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

## *Garden Talk!*

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
 Extension

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