

Sarah Denkler  
Horticulture Specialist  
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## **Spring is Upon Us**

Spring is in my sights and I can feel the excitement building. If you haven't started already, it is time to prepare your yard, garden, tools and shed for the full force of nature's growth. What should be on your to do list for this time of year?

Your soil should be prepared for ornamentals and for the garden. Ideally your soil test would have been done in the fall so you could have your amendments incorporated over winter; but if you haven't had a soil test in at least 2 years then you should do one to see what nutrients you need to add. Very often we get test results that show a very high content of one nutrient and a very low amount of another. This discrepancy needs to be known so that you can apply only what you need. Applying more of a high content nutrient not only wastes money but it releases nutrients into the environment through runoff and can cause your soil to be toxic to your plants. Till in your amendments and prepare a seed bed with loose soil.

Your garden should be prepared now so that you are ready to plant your cool season garden. Saint Patrick's Day is the time to plant your potatoes, onions and cool season crops such as lettuce and spinach. Your leafy vegetables will harvest as you prepare to plant your warm season garden.

In landscape beds you should clean out any debris and add organic matter if necessary. Many cities have compost facilities for citizens that can be used for this purpose. Make sure any compost you obtain is truly decomposed. If you see large pieces of wood, then you know that you need to find another source. Those large pieces of wood will use nitrogen to decompose. This will leave you with less nitrogen for your plants.

Sanitation is a very important part of disease control in your yard. Clean all your garden tools with a disinfectant such as bleach or alcohol. Use this time to sharpen your tools if you did not do this in the fall. Clean out your shed area and provide a clean area for storage of your garden equipment.

Before the Forsythia bush starts to bloom put down a pre-emergent for weeds that haven't yet sprouted. Bags that show 2-4D as the active ingredient are intended to control broadleaf weeds that are already green. These can be used on grasses but may harm landscape plants. The following are examples of pre-emergent herbicides that could be

used on landscape beds to control weeds that have not yet emerged: Balan/benefin, Barricade/ prodiamine, Dimension/dithiopyr, Pendulum/pendimethalin, Pre-M/pendimethalin, Ronstar/oxidiazon, Team/benefin + trifluralin, Tupersan/siduron, and Weedgrass Control/pendimethalin. These should be put down before a rain or watered in to move the controlling agent into the soil.

One more thing to remember for this early time of year is fungus control. If you had problems with spots on your dogwood leaves or disease issues in your fruit last year then there is a good chance there will be a problem this year as well. The Fruit Spray Schedules for the Homeowner, MU publication G6010 can be used to provide timing for disease issues and the proper chemical. If disease control has moved beyond sanitation and pruning, then chemical application must start as buds begin to swell. Fungus is usually waiting for this opportunity to attack plants. Although you may not see signs of the problem for a few more months it is now that leaves, flowers and fruit will become infected with disease issues.

*Helpful Sources: Fresenburg, Brad. Home Lawn Weed Control. Extension Publication G6750. University of Missouri. Rev. October 2006.*

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