

# Calendar

## Seasonal Events

There are a number of gardening events that repeat for several months, usually in the spring, summer, or fall. They are listed below along with some important web sites that will help you confirm the dates and times.

### Web sites

ABQ Area Extension Master Gardeners	<a href="http://www.abqmastergardeners.org">www.abqmastergardeners.org</a>
Bernalillo County Extension Office	<a href="http://bernalilloextension.nmsu.edu">bernalilloextension.nmsu.edu</a>
Bosque Del Apache Wildlife Preserve	<a href="http://www.friendsofthebosque.org">www.friendsofthebosque.org</a>
Rio Grande Botanic Garden	<a href="http://www.cabq.gov/biopark/garden">www.cabq.gov/biopark/garden</a>
Rio Grande Nature Center	<a href="http://www.enmrd.state.nm.us/nmparks/pages/parks/RGNC/RGNC.htm">www.enmrd.state.nm.us/nmparks/pages/parks/RGNC/RGNC.htm</a>

### January - February

**Santa Fe Greenhouses Seminar Series.** Check their web site for the topics, dates, and times [www.santfegreenhouses.com](http://www.santfegreenhouses.com) or call them at 505.473.2700.

### January - April

**Master Gardener classes.** This is a 14 week course intended for serious gardeners who are willing to donate their time and expertise to the community after being certified. Classes meet beginning in January on Tuesday from 8 am until noon and optional classes meet from 1-2:30 pm. Master Gardeners must donate 40 hours per year to the community. Classes are open (for a fee) to those who would like to audit the sessions on a per class basis. See more about becoming a Master Gardener in the Master Gardener section of this book. Applications are available beginning in the August.

### February - October

**Master Gardener phone hotline** is open beginning February 1 to October 31 from 9:30-2:30, seven days a week. After October, calls are routed to the Extension Office. Phone 292-7144 for answers to your gardening questions or use the web site above year round.

### March - April

**Youth Seed Project.** Master Gardeners, volunteering for the 4-H Program of Bernalillo County, go into 3rd grade classrooms in the area to make presentations about seed planting. The gardeners bring free seeds and present information about how to plant and nurture them. If you have a third grader, make sure his teacher knows about this fun opportunity. Call 243-1386 and ask for the Master Gardener Seed Program Coordinator.

## March - May

**Plants of the Southwest Seminar Series.** Usually held on Saturdays. Call 344.8830 for dates, topics and times. They also hold events at other times of year like their Fall Fiesta and Gourd Day.

## March - Aug

**BCWUA classes.** Drip irrigation and residential landscaping water efficiency classes are offered by the Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority on selected Saturdays each month. Check their website <http://www.abcwua.org> for more information.

## April - October

**Master Gardeners at Libraries.** Master Gardeners are at selected city libraries every other Saturday beginning April 1st, from 10 -3 for answers to gardening questions. Call the hotline 292-7144 for a location in your area.

## June - August

**Albuquerque Rose Garden Maintenance.** The Albuquerque Rose Garden at the Wyoming Regional Public Library is maintained by members of the Albuquerque Rose Society who meet every Tuesday evening during the summer to work and to answer questions from the public.

**“Summer Nights” at the Rio Grande Botanic Garden.** Every Thursday night in June, July and August, enjoy “Summer Nights” at the Rio Grande Botanic Garden. Gates open at 6:00 pm. Concerts start at 7 pm. Music, food and entertainment groups. A fee is charged.

**Summer Wildflower Trips.** Time to take a trip to the Sante Fe Ski Basin, the Sandias, and the Jemez Mountains in the summer to see a burst of wildflowers if we’ve had spring rain. Native penstemons, asters, columbines, orchids, and other varieties make a show in the high mountain meadows.

**Youth gardening programs.** Youth gardening programs are offered through 4-H projects. Children learn about gardening and plant and soil science. Call 243-1386 for information.

## June-September, October-May

**Rio Grande Nature Center Walks.** Learn about plants that attract birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds at the Rio Grande Nature Center, 2901 Candelaria NW. A weekly series of morning bird walks with naturalists is offered on Saturdays and Sundays. Call 344.7240 for times or use the website [www.rgnc.org](http://www.rgnc.org).

## July-October

**Growers Markets Open.** Various growers markets in the Albuquerque area open in July and continue into late Fall. Items offered include fresh fruit and produce, honey, jams, dried and fresh flowers, herbs and gourds. For a complete listing of markets go to [www.abqgrowersmkts.org](http://www.abqgrowersmkts.org) which has the opening dates and locations or see the Local Resources section of this book.

# January

## Weather

The weather is COLD – but not as cold as other places! January is the coldest month in New Mexico. Temperatures range from the low 20's at night to daytime highs in the upper 40's on average, with a mean snowfall of 2 ½ inches. The snow doesn't last long on the ground except in higher elevations. It's sunny and not very windy, except when a snowstorm develops.



## What's Blooming

Crocus – the harbinger of spring – comes up through frozen ground. Creeping rosemary is covered with tiny blue flowers if grown in a warm, protected spot.

## Xeric Blooms

None this month.

## Garden Activities

Once the holidays are over, it's time for a new project. Do a little spring cleaning. Toss out your holiday catalogs and make room for seed and plant catalogs. It is too cold to do much outside, but it's a good time to start planning. Spring seems like light years from now, but some advance planning and planting will save you time and money in the months to come.

What new plants are being offered? Are there any new colors or varieties of the old standbys? What plants have been designated "Perennial of the Year"? Is it something you already have? Would it fit in your garden? The gardening merits of a plant are not always obvious from its photograph. "Perennial of the Year" winners are worth checking out. Before you order by mail, see if your local nursery can order it for you. Most would be happy to try.

Now is the time to study your garden from indoors. Find a window with a ray of sun and put a chair beside it. What can be seen from there? Delight in what you see; plant more of your favorite plants – perhaps a different color/variety. What shapes and colors are interesting? Consider planting an ornamental tree or shrub in a place where it can be seen from the window.

Plants should be placed so they will be seen from a particular vantage point. For example, early bloomers should be placed where they can be seen from inside the house. Tall plants should be placed at the rear of a visual space. Chances are you will not be spending very much time outdoors in January and February. Late bloomers can be placed near the patio or other seating areas that are used in the summer.

Start a gardening journal for ideas; later you can identify what worked well and what did not. Be sure to include copies of your original plans, as well as the final versions. Visit city parks, xeric gardens, and neighborhood yards to create a list of plants that have colorful fruit, interesting bark, or attractive seed heads during winter. This is a great way to make new friends as you walk around the neighborhood. Update garden journals.

## To Do List

- If you did not recycle your Christmas tree for mulch, let it be a tasty treat for the birds. Set it outside (still in its stand) and decorate it with cranberries, suet, pine cones covered in peanut butter and birdseed, etc. Enjoy the birds and see how many you can identify. (A good bird guide would be helpful.) Discard the tree when you begin preparing the garden for planting.
- Turn your compost pile, lightly dress with manure, water, and cover lightly with soil, compost. For the most part, the compost pile is dormant. This is a good month to do trench composting.
- Check to make sure that perennials and tender shrubs are mulched. Finish cleaning up any leftover plant material from the garden. Pile discarded Christmas-tree boughs and evergreen prunings on top of perennial, bulb, and shrub beds. Hay straw (use weed free) and pine needles also work.
- Ensure that all your tools have been cleaned and prepared for spring: clean, sharpen and oil your shovels, pruners, and hand tools. Check wooden handles to see if they should be replaced, repaired, oiled lightly with linseed oil, and stuck into a bucket of sand. Make a list of tools to purchase.
- Plan your spring and summer garden. Make out your seed and plant list. Order specialty seeds that you cannot purchase locally.

**GARDEN TIP!!!.** Make a scale drawing of your lot. Take it to a copy center and make several (at least 5) copies, enlarging the largest planting areas (save the original for future use.) Sketch in and label all plants by blooming season. Take the 5th copy and plan the changes that you want to make. Take your calendar and schedule the week you want to or must do it by. Taking a few hours to get organized now will make your gardening experience much easier!

## Watering

Continue watering once a month as long as temperatures are below 50 degrees. Be sure you don't forget any perennials. Exception: Many established xeric plants DO NOT require winter watering.

## Pruning

This is the time to begin pruning trees and shrubs – while plants are dormant. Prune when the temperature is above freezing. Cut out dead, diseased, and crossing branches first; then prune to shape. DO NOT prune spring flowering ornamentals, like forsythia, until after they bloom (this year's flowers appear on last year's growth). DO NOT prune grapes or roses yet to avoid risk of frost damage. Prune honeysuckle hard. Prune pomegranate, wisteria, and summer-blooming spireas now through March. Prune nandina by cutting oldest stems to the ground as needed to keep plant bushy. Late in the month, you can begin pruning butterfly bush back to active growth.

## Planting

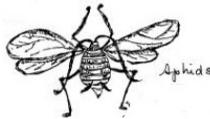
It's time to start planting — indoors, that is. Now is the time to start your seeds for biennials and slow growing perennials. New seeds are available this month at the nurseries, and seeds you order from catalogs will arrive quickly. Why start seeds indoors? There are several reasons.

- You will get better germination under controlled (indoor) conditions.
- It is economical.
- You can try varieties that are not available in the nurseries.
- You can garden sooner!

It's not too late to scatter some wildflower seeds for blooms later this summer. Starting hardy perennials is a fun gardening exercise to do with children. Hardy perennials that can be planted include bleeding heart, butterfly weed, columbine, delphinium, liatris, and penstemon. These seeds require a period of chilling to germinate. Plant seeds in soil-filled pots and place them outdoors out of direct sun. Keep the soil moist, and whenever snow is available, pile it on the pots. After six weeks of chilling, place the pots in a greenhouse or set them on a sunny windowsill to sprout. When two sets of true leaves appear on the seedlings, transplant them into individual containers. Continue growing plants indoors until spring when you can plant them into the garden.

**Seed-starting** can be done easily and inexpensively with materials that are available at the hardware store, or for free. One pointer: if you use recycled pots, they need to be cleaned with chlorine bleach and water (1:10 solution) to remove old soil and eliminate potential disease problems, like fungus or bacteria. This will help you avoid passing on last year's problems.

Plan ahead! It is important to purchase any seeds you will want for fall planting as well as earlier in the year. They are often hard to find later in the summer. Lettuces and other greens, sweet peas and edible peas, annual poppies, larkspur and many wildflowers are some to remember for fall planting.



## Troubleshooting

**Aphids.** Earliest aphids may appear on pines. Leaving early aphid populations alone may actually help establish predator populations, as the early predators will find a food source. Eliminate winter annual weeds such as wild mustards. They harbor over-wintering insects such as leafhoppers.

**Weekly Check Walk.** On a mild, sunny day walk around your yard and take stock. Branches damaged by winter storms may need to be pruned.

**Brown Egg Cases.** As you look over your plants, watch for the brown egg cases of praying mantises. They are a valuable predator in the yard that you can encourage by not disturbing their eggs during clean-up or pruning. The egg cases are about one-half to one inch long, shaped like a lozenge, and are usually attached to a twig or wall.

## Houseplants

Let tap water stand overnight or use a chlorine remover before watering plants. Chlorine frequently causes brown tips on leaves and/or leaf drop on palms, spider plants, African violets, and corn plants. Some plants are NOT sensitive to chlorine.

If possible, give plants a footbath when watering. Set the plants in a basin of water — or the bathtub with 2-3 " of tepid water — for several hours to thoroughly hydrate the roots.

Remove dead leaves and flowers from forced bulbs. When the paperwhites and hyacinths bulbs are done blooming, plant in a pot with a slow-release granular fertilizer mixed into the soil. Set the pots where the leaves will receive some sunlight, and replant the bulbs outside in March for spring blooms next year. Paperwhites will need to be planted in a somewhat protected spot.

Check all houseplants carefully for insects. Whiteflies and fungus gnats are particularly obnoxious this time of year. Know your plants. Some plants should be completely dry before watering, while others should never dry out. Check to ensure applicable plants are dry before watering. Over-watered plants are more vulnerable. Ensure that all plants have sufficient humidity.

## Around Town

- A seven week Floral Design Certification Course begins the second Tuesday of the month from 7pm-9pm at the Albuquerque Garden Center. Call 296.6020 for details.
- The Think Trees conference is held the last week in January annually. Go to [thinktreesnm.org](http://thinktreesnm.org) for more information about the conference.

# February

## Weather

It's about 10 degrees warmer on average than it was last month. February temperatures are in the high 20's at night to mid-50's during the day. Actual temperature variations may be extreme this month. There's almost as much snow as in January, and it's mostly sunny.

Gardening activities accelerate this month. As daytime temperatures warm up it feels like spring is just around the corner. Unfortunately, February is just a tease and belies the March-through-May winds that invariably come later. Take advantage of this brief respite to prepare your garden for spring planting.



## What's Blooming

Crocus, snowdrops (*Galanthus*), pussy willow, *Iris reticulata*, *Mahonia*, and winter jasmine (*J. nudiflorum*) begin blooming this month. In south-facing beds, you will see daffodils beginning to open and the earliest forsythia. Apricot trees begin blooming later in the month.

## Xeric Blooms

Prostrate rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* "prostrate") is covered with tiny blue flowers if it is in a protected sunny spot. Tiny tulips, daffodils, and Crocus — species bulbs, not their giant cousins— make a colorful display now through March.

## Garden Activities

Observe what is happening in your garden on warm days. Pay attention to protected areas of the yard. Is there an enclosed patio or south-facing area of your yard that enjoys milder temperatures? Could you grow more tender, Zone 8 or 9 plants here, or get earlier blooms from spring bulbs? Check under leaf piles for hidden signs of spring — new growth, an undetected bloom.

Cut a few branches of Forsythia and other early-flowering shrubs to bring indoors. Put them in a vase of water and they will soon flower for you.

Many plants begin to show some signs of activity this month. If you go looking, you'll find some early swelling buds on trees and shrubs, and new green growth pushing up from roots and bulbs. Your children will enjoy this activity; they can be taught to keep looking for first signs of spring and to follow the development of plants growing around them.

Go by the Albuquerque Garden Center and check out the courtyard to see a warm microclimate and early blooming plants. While you're there, take a look in the library, do a little research or catalog browsing, and look at the many garden books in the gift shop.

### To Do List

- Outdoors, the ground is softening, and you can begin to dig. Cautiously start cleaning out any perennial beds that are showing signs of life. You may want to leave a little mulch in place for frost protection. Add organic matter to soil where you want to transplant later in the spring or early summer -- then solarize.
- Try solarizing where you expect annual weeds or unwanted reseeding to be a problem. See "Soil Solarization for Weed Control" in the "Garden Talk" section of this book.
- Be alert and quickly remove any green plants in the mustard family as they appear. They will begin appearing by mid February. Not only will this reduce your weed problem later in the year but mustards harbor unwanted viruses, e.g. curly top, and insects, e.g. leafhoppers. This is a good example of "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure."
- If late January or February has been wet, apply a pre-emergent herbicide to any area where you do not want seeds to sprout during the next few months. For an organic method use corn gluten based ones. An application is only effective for 3-5 months. Do not apply more than 3 - 4 times a year. Late February or early March is a good time to start your scheduled applications. A pre-emergent herbicide prevents seeds from sprouting. It does not harm established plantings, transplants, and perennial plants that grow from rootstock or bulbs. It will significantly reduce weeding in xeric landscapes.
- Your evergreens would appreciate a strong spray from the hose to clean off soot and insects.
- Container-grown plants that have been kept indoors can be set out anytime the ground is not frozen.
- Continue shopping for seeds at nurseries and in catalogs and among seed-saving friends.
- On nice days remove the frost protective cover on your cool season vegetables that you planted last fall. Raise the lid slightly on your cold frame.
- Apply dormant oil spray to deciduous trees and shrubs to kill over-wintering insects, eggs, and larvae. Check the label for appropriate temperatures to apply.
- If you have shrubs or small trees that you want removed from your yard, tell a friend who needs plants that now is the time to come and dig. New gardeners and homeowners on bare earth lots are eager for plants!
- Persian and French lilac often propagate by producing sprouts from the soil around the shrub. These new sprouts have a much greater chance of growing than the large shrub when it is moved. To maximize transplanting success, prepare the soil by adding compost and rototilling it in. Dig the sprouts with as large a root system as possible, and plant in the center of this prepared "flower bed". Thoroughly water. Mulch. Water every 2 - 4 weeks to maintain moisture at a depth of about 3 inches. When growth resumes, water weekly for the first year.

- Begin fertilizing vegetables, irises, bulbs and tubers with superphosphate or a slow release fertilizer. (Only add superphosphate once or twice a year.) More organic choices include: bone meal, manure compost, and liquid organic fertilizers like fish emulsion and seaweed extract. Feed fruit and nut trees with a granular fertilizer or organic fertilizers like manure, bone meal, blood meal or fish meal, work into the soil and water thoroughly.

## Watering

Increase watering to 2 or 3 times a month as temperatures go above 50 degrees. Be sure to water irises from now until they finish blooming.

## Pruning

Continue pruning. Some shrubs need to be pruned hard: Butterfly bush, Russian sage, and ornamental grasses (except blue fescue) need to be pruned almost to the ground. Many shrubs should not be pruned at this time. If you know the names of your plants, you can find out what sort of pruning each requires. Pruning references include: the Master Gardener Hotline, Sunset Western Garden Book, or Enchanted Gardening. Consult the "Information Sources" section in this book. Some shrubs must be pruned immediately after blooming in order to not cut off the next year's blooms.

## Planting

- Continue planting seeds indoors; start tomatoes and other frost sensitive plants at the end of the month.
- Mid to late February is the time to start planting sweet peas and garden peas, and roots of asparagus and rhubarb in the warmer areas. If you didn't plant in the late fall, late February is the time to plant lettuce, radishes, carrots, beets, turnips, and cabbage.  
**TIP!!!** Intersperse onion sets to mark your rows. They'll come up quickly. "Top multiplier" heritage onion sets work especially well for this and will provide green onions for your table in about 4 weeks. As you remove these "scallions" they aerate and loosen the soil.
- This is the ideal time for setting out bare root trees, shrubs, and vines while they are dormant. Plants may come from catalog orders, local nurseries, Plant Exchange contacts, and friends' yards. Keep the bare roots moist and covered; don't expose them to drying winds and sun. Roses can be moved now, but cover with mulch for another month after moving. Start selecting landscape plants for purchase later in the spring.
- In the warmer areas of Albuquerque you can begin setting out bachelor buttons, calendulas, cyclamens, primroses, snapdragons, stock, and wallflowers.

**Garden Tip!!!** Dig up and divide summer and fall-blooming perennials: daylilies, asters, chrysanthemums, etc. now through March. Here is an easy way to remember when to divide: If it blooms in the fall, divide or move in the spring. If it blooms in the spring, divide or move in the fall.



## Troubleshooting

**Pests & Problems.** Look for early aphids on pine trees. Scale on *Euonymus* is a widespread problem. When the new hatchlings, called “crawlers,” emerge, they are most susceptible to control. In warm spots, this can be as early as February. The crawlers appear as tiny yellowish dust moving about. Early treatment of pests and problems keeps them from becoming big problems. Both of the above conditions have a non-poisonous treatment: Horticultural oil spray for scale and a strong blast of water for aphids. Conversely, knowing that *euonymus* is subject to scale, consider replacing these plants with better suited alternatives.

**Crown Gall.** As you transplant roses or other dormant plants, look for unusual swellings along the stems which may indicate crown gall. If found, either cut away the stem or remove the plant and choose not to plant that plant again. There is no treatment for the bacterial infection which causes crown gall – prevention is the best alternative. Prevention can be done by avoiding wounding susceptible plants at or near the soil line and sterilizing your pruning tools between cuts using rubbing alcohol in a closed spray bottle.

**Plant identification.** Are you not sure what plants you have in your yard? Take the time now to begin identifying them with the help of plant books and information from other gardeners. If there are plants you can’t identify, take a sample and/or a photo to the Garden Center or the County Extension Office. Master Gardeners or the county extension agent can help, sometimes with a home visit. You may have to wait for some plants to leaf out before taking a sample. Once you learn what you have, become an expert on that plant.

**Spring weeds.** If you had a lot of annual weeds last year, now is the time to solarize your soil to eliminate them this year. Do not solarize the soil where you planted bulbs and perennials, as the heat build up may harm them. Solarization will also help eliminate nematodes and other harmful organisms. (See “Soil Solarization for Weed Control” in the Garden Talk Section of this book.)

**Start monitoring for Piñon needle scale** during mild winters (see March checklist). The egg masses appear as whitish cottony material in bark crevices on the trunk and major branches. Hose this material off with a strong jet of water to eliminate most of the eggs. Use a stiff brush or broom to help remove the eggs. If removed in this way, most will not hatch and those that survive will hatch far from their host. You may want to leave a few to monitor for hatching – when rubbed into the palm of your hand, unhatched eggs leave a yellow smear.

**Weekly Check Walk.** Continue your weekly check walk. Take care of any broken branches and obvious insect infestations. Watch out for signs of disease. Check soil moisture. Make notes about plants to move to a new location, new plants you’d like to try, and something to fill up that obvious gap that you just noticed.

## Houseplants

**Celebrate Valentine’s Day!** Buy flowering house plants or pansies for your Valentines and take one home for yourself. Spending time in a greenhouse is a time-tested cure for the midwinter blues. If you re-pot your purchases, you can get your hands dirty, too!

## Around Town

- Plan to attend the Xeriscape Conference and Exposition annually in February. The theme varies from year to year, but the conference always provides great information about conserving resources. The conference is sponsored by the Xeriscape Council and the Water Conservation Alliance. Internationally renowned speakers and authors present material relevant to the Southwest. Use the web site [xeriscapenm.com](http://xeriscapenm.com) to register. The website has great xeriscaping information as well.
- The County Extension Service Organic Conference is held in late February. Call 243.1386 for information.
- Donate to or attend the annual Rummage Sale at the Albuquerque Garden Center the last Friday and Saturday of the month from 9am-3pm.
- The New Mexico Gourd Society hosts its annual Celebration of Gourds Festival. See their website [www.rgnc.org](http://www.rgnc.org) for details.

# March

## Weather

On average the temperature ranges from around 30 degrees at night to 60 degrees during the day, but it changes daily. One day it is warm and sunny; the next it is snowing. You can expect, on average, about 2 inches of snow in March. The only constant is the wind, which can blow sand in a vertical sheet. (Where you live in town will make a difference in how much wind you get). It's a singularly frustrating month to be a gardener!

The warm, mild days in February created the illusion that spring was almost here. In fact, some of the dreariest days of winter lie ahead – in March! Although the daytime temperatures continue to rise, the weather is very unsettled and very windy. By March, wannabe gardeners are chomping at the bit to begin planting. Yet, wary nursery growers have only the barest of offerings on their perennial shelves. Keep that in mind next January and plant some seed flats of your own.



## What's Blooming

Pussy willow (*Salix caprea*), iris, forsythia, crocus, redbud (*Cercis*) and wisteria are flowering. Bulb displays include daffodils, snowdrops, *Triteleia*, hyacinths, and early tulips. All the fruit trees are in bloom this month: apricot (if the blooms haven't frozen), plum, pear, peach, nectarine, apple, crabapple, cherry and quince. By the end of the month, creeping Phlox (*P. subulata*), Iceland poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*), and mid-season tulips are in bloom. Some lilacs and spirea also bloom.

## Xeric Blooms

Winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), Oregon grape holly or Mahonia (*Berberis aquifolium*), and golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) are showy now. Several varieties of euphorbia, Persian rockcress, penstemons, and thymes, as well as hardy manzanita and coral honeysuckle vine. Lovely ground covers appear this month: pink soapwort (*Saponaria ocymoides*), Thyme "Pink Chintz," Turkish speedwell (*Veronica pectinata*), "Basket of Gold" (*Aurinia saxatilis*), blue spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*), and mat Penstemon (*P. caespitosus*).

## Garden Activities

Pansies are now available in the nurseries. They come in a beautiful range of colors, are hardy enough to survive our erratic spring weather, and provide a bright spot in the March garden.

This is "furniture moving" time in the garden – that is the horticultural "furniture". Look around. If you do not like where something is planted, this is the time to transplant it. The ground is soft enough to dig, and most plants are just starting to break dormancy so they can be safely transplanted.

Why not have a perennial/biennial plant exchange party with friends or sponsor a new gardener with your plants' offspring? Many schools like to have free plants to work with in the spring.

## To Do List

- Go ahead and finish cleaning your beds, watching carefully for volunteer seedlings of perennials and hardy annuals in your garden. They are easy to transplant in early spring and will usually have good root systems. Larkspur, delphinium and bachelor buttons are good candidates.
- When forsythia blooms, apply a pre-emergent herbicide like corn gluten on your lawn. It will significantly reduce the amount of time you spend digging dandelions and leafy spurge later in the year. DO NOT apply it where you want to plant seeds as it retards seed germination.
- Empty winter compost from bins, sift it to remove uncomposted material, and work it into the soil where you want to plant annuals or vegetables. Return incompletely composted material to the bin and add chicken manure or another high nitrogen source to give it a jump-start. Note: chicken manure has a high salt content.
- Add compost, balanced fertilizer, and/or super phosphate to flower beds. The organic approach includes a blend of blood, fish, and bone meal. The blood meal provides nitrogen and breaks down quickly, fish meal provides nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, the bone meal provides phosphorus with some nitrogen and calcium. N-P-K is balanced between 5 and 7 for each. Be sure to mix this into the soil to help feed plant roots. Most plants appreciate a light application of nitrogen in March. Remove heavy mulches by the end of the month.
- Divide clump forming perennials such as daylilies and chrysanthemums.
- Fertilize trees or amend the soil with compost and other organic matter such as composted manure or bone and cottonseed meal as leaves appear. Apply iron that's chelated to trees (e.g. silver maple and globe willow) that tend to show an iron deficiency (chlorosis) during the summer.
- For cool season grasses such as bluegrass, aerate, and dethatch if needed. Fertilize with a high nitrogen formula (the first number of N-P-K) and increase watering. Rake well and compost removed thatch. DO NOT add thatch to the compost bin if the lawn has been treated with any type of herbicide.
- Annual weeds enthusiastically welcome spring. One good weekend dedicated to eradication and five minutes a day will keep them under control. After a rain is the easiest and best time to pull weeds. Be sure to discard them in the trash. If you drop them on the ground or in the compost pile, some of them will reseed and bless you later with another crop. In areas where you do not want volunteer annual plants, apply a pre-emergent herbicide if you didn't apply it last month. Water well after applying. NOTE: It is NOT necessary to apply pre-emergent herbicides more than once every three months. Corn gluten is a good organic choice.
- **Garden Tip!!!** After emptying and sifting your winter compost bin, set aside the sifted compost to cure or work into soil where you intend to plant annuals and vegetables, late April or May. DO NOT put this on your plants right away. It is probably high enough in nitrogen to burn them. Wait at least 4 – 6 weeks before using. Another high nitrogen soil amendment is coffee grounds. If applying in large quantities, treat them as "hot" compost (needs to be composted to a cooler temperature or it will burn your plants). Set aside a small area to work to "cool" the compost and coffee grounds.

## Watering

Increase watering to 3 to 4 times a month if temperatures are consistently over 50 degrees; otherwise continue watering as in February. After heavy winds, irrigate to replace lost moisture. Be sure to keep recent transplants well watered.

## Pruning

Finish pruning fruit trees and summer-flowering shrubs. Start pruning roses and grape vines late in the month. Prune dead blooms from Santolina, prune chamisa hard to promote new growth, and if it's growing too large, prune the oldest stems (renewal pruning) from apache plume. Prune frost burned leaves from Mahonia and after flowering is complete, winter jasmine. Crape myrtles bloom on new growth, so frost damage can be cut away once new growth appears. Prune raspberries and other fruit bramble bushes, except for "Heritage" raspberries, which are cut back in the fall. Prune frost damaged wood from tender shrubs.

## Planting

- Continue bare-root planting into the first part of the month.
- Plant balled and burlapped shrubs and trees.
- Transplant pansies, snapdragons, hollyhocks, Dianthus, carnations, statice, and stocks into the garden. Most perennials can be put out this month in settled weather. Young plants from the nursery or your own seed-starting operation should be hardened off outdoors for a week or two before transplanting.
- In the vegetable garden, dig in several inches of "cool compost" or well rotted manure and set out plants from the cabbage family: cabbage and Brussels sprouts. Both usually do well here. Because broccoli and cauliflower are sensitive to extreme heat fluctuations, they are more at risk in the spring. Some years they do well, and other years they do not.
- Continue seeding or transplanting salad greens and greens for cooking. Plant seeds of cool season growers: radishes, carrots, beets, turnips, onions, kohlrabi, parsnips, and peas. Try endive, assorted lettuces, Mesclun (lettuce mix), spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips.
- Plant potatoes from mid-March to mid-April.
- Plant herbs that are hardy: parsley, sage, thyme, dill (later in the month), tarragon plants. Small herb plants from the nursery are usually quite tender and must be hardened off before planting. Read the Basics section for the definition of terms like "hardened off" if this is a new term for you.
- After March 20th, begin planting some gladioli bulbs every other week for continuous color during the summer.



## Troubleshooting

**Larger Pests** —If larger four-footed pests live in your neighborhood, such as deer and rabbits, put wire cages or wrapping around new and tender plants.

**Gnats** —Tiny gnat-like insects are common in late winter and early spring. These pesky critters that flit about your face live on the thatch in your lawn. Reducing or removing that thatch will reduce the number of gnats.

**Pear psylla & Peach twig borer** — If you haven't finished up using a dormant oil spray on deciduous (leafless) plants, especially fruit trees, do so now. This is especially important if diseases or insects were a problem last year. Oil treatment can be with the heavier dormant oil - winter season spray only - or with the lighter horticultural oil, which can be applied year-round. "Dormant spraying" with dormant oil must be done before the buds begin to open, otherwise the sulfur and/or other heavy material in the spray will burn the leaves or petals. Another kind of dormant spraying uses lime sulfur to burn out over-wintering diseases on woody plants; obviously this type of spray must also be done when buds are still tight. **Always read label directions before applying any pesticide.** Organic treatments include biological control, cultural control, and sprays of organic dormant oil, insecticidal soaps, azadirachtin, or kaolin clay. Good garden hygiene practices such as removing fallen fruits and foliage can control many damaging insects and is cheaper.

**Piñon needle scale.** The eggs that survived your removal efforts (see February) will hatch sometime in late March or early April. As soon as you determine hatch has occurred, treat the trunk and limbs with a lightweight horticultural oil, an insecticidal soap, or a botanical insecticide.

## Houseplants

The days are getting longer and your houseplants are beginning to wake-up and grow. About mid month begin fertilizing houseplants. If needed, repot before you begin fertilizing. If the plant's roots are crowded and circle the pot (root bound), trim roots lightly along each side and the bottom, then spread out from the bottom like butterfly wings. In some cases when a plant is seriously root bound or experiencing unwanted or rapid growth, you may need to repot it to a pot that is one size larger than the current pot. Discard the old potting mix, clean pots and disinfect them with a 10% chlorine bleach solution before reusing to remove lingering disease bacteria or fungus.

## Around Town

- Rose Society volunteers will be working at the Albuquerque Rose Garden three weekends in March pruning the roses in the garden. The public is invited to observe and questions will be answered. Check the newspaper for dates or call 296-6020.