

MASTER OF DISGUISE

Sports



PREP GARDEN FOR SPRING

Home & Garden



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COURIER-POST

Saturday, January 31, 2009

South Jersey's Newspaper

75 cents

Before the thaw

February is the month for pruning vines, planting bare root trees, and starting seedlings. Work this month sets the stage for a glorious garden this spring and summer.

There are still plenty of cool days ahead in most locations, but February is the opening act for the gardening year in most of North America and Europe. Attention to the garden this month will help insure its health and vitality in the coming growing season.

Prune vines

After nurturing and encouraging plants through last year's growing season, it may seem counterintuitive to dramatically cut back that growth in late winter, but the University of Washington Extension Service says pruning stimulates vigorous new growth. In all but the coldest climates, February is a good time to take out the pruning shears and trim grapes, late flowering clematis, wisteria and in some locations, roses. The Extension Service recommends feeding and mulching plants after pruning to provide adequate nutrients.

Order seeds, start seedlings

Peruse the seed catalogs, then order flower and vegetable seeds online. They will arrive within a few days. Seeds can be started in flats or pots using an enriched potting soil. Place plants in a sunny window, greenhouse or cold frame, and check daily so they do not dry out.

Plant fruit trees

and shrubs

Bare root trees and shrubs are less expensive

in February than they will be later in the spring when nursery personnel transfer them to pots. If the soil is not too wet or frozen, February is a great time to plant. Trees and shrubs will experience less shock and be ready to start growing when the temperatures rise.

Consider

native plants

Many regions of the world have experienced warmer and dryer than normal summers in recent years. Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, an organization promoting the use of native plants, says native species are usually hardy, and adapted to the local soils and climatic conditions. Once established, native species need little or no irrigation or fertilizer, and are usually more resistant to pests and diseases than non-natives.

Start composting

February is a good time to start a compost pile. Whole books have been written explaining how to turn garden and kitchen wastes into rich organic matter. Intensive management of a compost pile can bring gratifying results in a matter of weeks, but the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services says all that work is not necessary. Eventually all organic matter decomposes, so just pile up leaves, grass clippings and vegetable wastes from the kitchen in an out-of-the-way place, and over a period of several months the materials will break down into soil enhancing compost.

—Source: www.landscaping.suite101.com/article.cfm/garden_jobs_for_february

Saturday, January 31, 2009

LIVING HOME & GARDEN

Valuable antique
valentines

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the TOOLBOX OUTDOORS

Spring is a way's off, but planning season is well underway for the serious gardener. These tools may provide more motivation:

- Heavy-duty Armadillo hoses have galvanized steel shells, don't tangle or kink and are even safe to drink from. \$16.95 to \$144.95 depending on the length, at www.armadillogardenhose.com.

- The galvanized seed storage box. \$10 at Smith & Hawken.

- Bulbs are usually planted in the fall, but perennial lily bulbs can be planted in the spring as well for summer blooming. Bulbs average about \$4 per bulb at garden and home improvement stores.

INTERIORS



Gannett News Service

The Yellow Asiatic Lily bulb can be planted in spring for summer.

Cheap and chic home decor is the way to go for a new look without spending much cash. Here are some ideas:

- Run a dowel rod through a quilt or a yard of unfinished fabric in an interesting print and hang on the wall.

- Use the same color for accessories — such as pillows, a vase and flowers — throughout a room for a cohesive, finished look.

- If you like the shape but not the color of an accessory on sale, paint it with two coats of matte white spray paint. A collection of painted white vases in varying shapes and sizes creates instant art.

- Use fresh flowers to bring nature into your home.

Spring into gardening

The more you do now,
the less you'll have to do when winter thaws



JOHN ZIOMEK/CourierPost

Winter cabbage (above) adds color to boring winter landscapes, an option for gardeners who can't quite wait til spring. Mike Devlin, executive director of the Camden Children's Garden, sharpens a shovel as he prepares to do some winter garden chores.

By WILFORD S. SHAMLIN
Courier-Post Staff

The daylight saving time reminder, "spring forward, fall back," can just as easily be applied to spring gardening prep.

The best gardeners know it's better to spring into action now, even while it's still cold outdoors.

Others have learned the hard way that procrastination can prevent you from putting your best flower forward.

"For the gardener who likes to garden all year long, there's plenty to do," says Mike Devlin, who's been gardening for 50 years and is now executive director of the Camden City Garden Club.

"You're doing your planning and preparation. That's big right now. At least in this climate."

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If you haven't gotten your seeds yet, get to it! Early birds tend to get the best selection, so that means buying now. Wait until warm weather breaks and you'll quickly realize you're too late.

If you're computer savvy, it's easy to find seed companies and browse through their Web sites and catalogs.

"In this high-tech age, people are visiting Web sites and you can have a lot less paper in your life," Devlin explains.

Now is a good time to test soil and

Garden/Start prepping now for spring

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make sure whatever you plant has the best chance to grow. Watch out for sandy soil, low drainage and high acidity, according to the Camden County Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Clementon.

"Healthy soil is essential to a productive plant, so it pays to test especially if your results were unimpressive last year," says an online gardening guide produced by Desmesne Info, an online company specializing in home improvement and maintenance.

Soil samples can be turned into the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office in the county where you reside and analyzed for a nominal fee.

If you're starting a new garden, map out the planting area exactly as you want to see it in spring. If it's an existing garden, work to restore it by cutting back and removing dead plants and turning trimmings into compost.

Devlin believe it's always sound advice to discard dead material because it could invite insects or disease, endangering



Camden Children's Garden Executive Director Mike Devlin trims dead pepper and basil plants, preparing the space for spring planting.

plants. Prune any vines, shrubs and trees before they bud, and do some weeding with the idea that the more you do now, the less your workload later.

But experts warn gardeners to avoid digging too early; doing so can damage the soil's structure.

"If you pick up a handful of soil, it should fall apart, not stick together like glue," according to the Web site, Flower Gardening Made Easy.

"When it's dry enough, you can start to dig beds and add compost or ma-

nure in preparation for planting."

As you prepare your

ON THE WEB

■ www.camdenchildrensgarden.org/: For information on Camden City Garden Club and Camden Children's Garden.

■ www.demesne.info/: For more information about topics of interest to homeowners.

■ www.camdencounty.com/government/offices/rutgers/: Check out the site for information on this organization, which has a master gardener program. Or call (856) 566-2900.

■ www.flower-gardening-made-easy.com/early_spring_garden.html: For more information about spring gardening preparation.

your tools. Hint, hint. Sharpen blades and budget for new tools or replacements.

Now also is a good time to start growing plants, in part by forcing bulbs indoors under artificial light.

The Desmesne site suggests sowing seeds in starter trays according to package instructions and the last frost date for your area.

Mid-March is about the earliest you can plant anything with a good chance for survival. Gardeners can plant cool-weather vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale and collard greens, Devlin says.

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garden for the growing season, it may be a good time to assess the condition of



JOHN ZIOMEK/Courier-Post

Children's Garden Executive Director Mike Devlin puts the plant trimmings into the compost pile.