



Gardening Advice: "Thinking Spring"

Sue Ann Jabin
The Gardening Angel, Inc.

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Hooray!!! Warm days in the forecast... time to get started!!!

We have been studying catalogues, reading our garden magazines and dreaming new garden schemes for a couple of months. With the promise of warmer days, let's get out to clean up the winter debris from our gardens and landscapes. It is a beginning filled with lots of hope. As we pick up branches and other wind-blown accumulation, let's trim off dead material and begin to take inventory of plants that are already greeting us and this new season. New life is so miraculous... invigorating and energizing!

Early March is the time to cut down the ornamental grasses and fertilize with 31-0-0, helping the new growth to emerge evenly.

Spring bulbs will benefit from Bulb Booster or Bulb-tone, stimulating their growth and bloom.

Early April is an appropriate time to divide those clumps of perennials that didn't get separated last fall. There are always more garden chores than can physically be accomplished at the end of the season.

If you left seed heads up for the birds through the winter, now is the time to cut them back along with any other winterizing that was not accomplished last fall.

Since our winter was a mild one with warm temps in January, weeds got a head start. **Yes, there are weeds to pull!**

As the compost bins thaw and become viable, stir them and begin to spread that "black gold" around your perennials. No need to use much fertilizer, if you compost.

Spot fertilize, as needed.

Feed the rhododendron before they bloom with an acidic fertilizer, liquid or granular, your preference. If this is done early, the spring rains will work it into the soil.

Now is a good time to clean up the edge of your beds. Don't let lawn grass invade your perennial and annual borders. If you control that renegade now, you won't fight it all season.

Explore your mulching options and spread it before your plants begin to grow and spread.

Clean out your urns and pots that held winter greens. Prepare for spring and early summer displays. While the temperature grows more consistent, plan some really fun and dramatic container plantings. There are so many new and exciting selections to choose from this year. Let your imagination soar... go wild... the sky is the limit! Dare to boldly try new concepts and combinations. Container drama will electrify your garden and lift your spirit.

These suggested chores will fill the good, out-door days of the early season. Take it easy... don't overdue it. Those gardening muscles need to be gradually toned up. It will be a long and busy season! Above all... **have fun and enjoy!**

Sue Ann Jabin is owner of The Gardening Angel, Inc. Feel free to contact her at 616-957-0236 for any of your gardening needs.