

# Garden Tips for March!

*David Hillock*

## Lawn and Turf

- Remove excessive thatch from warm-season lawns. Dethatching, if necessary, should precede crabgrass control treatment. ([HLA-6604](#))
- Broadleaf weeds can easily be controlled in cool-season lawns at this time with post-emergent broadleaf herbicides.
- Preemergent crabgrass control chemicals can still be applied to cool- and warm-season turfgrasses. Heed label cautions when using any weed killers near or in the root zone of desirable plantings.
- March is the second best time of the year to seed cool-season turfgrass; however, fall is the best time to plant. ([HLA-6419](#))
- Cool-season lawns such as bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass may be fertilized now with the first application of the season. Usually, four applications of fertilizer are required per year, in March, May, October, and November. ([HLA-6420](#))
- Begin mowing cool-season grasses at 1½ to 3½ inches high. ([HLA-6420](#))

## Flowers & Vegetables

- Cultivate annual flower and vegetable planting beds to destroy winter weeds.
- Apply mulch to control weeds in beds. Landscape fabric barrier can reduce the amount of mulch but can dry out and prevent water penetration. Thus, organic litter makes the best mulch.
- Prune roses just before growth starts and begin a regular disease spray program as the foliage appears on susceptible varieties. ([HLA-6403](#) & [EPP-7607](#))
- Avoid excessive walking and working in the garden when foliage and soils are wet.
- Start warm-season vegetable transplants indoors.
- Divide and replant overcrowded, summer and fall blooming perennials. Mow or cut back old lirioppe and other ornamental grasses before new growth begins.
- Your cool-season vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnips etc. should be planted by the middle of March.
- Watch for cutworms that girdle newly planted vegetables during the first few weeks of establishment. Cabbage looper and cabbageworm insects should be monitored and controlled in the garden ([EPP-7313](#)).

## Garden Planting Guide for Cool-Season Vegetables

It's not too late to start some of those cool-season plants for a spring harvest; that is if the weather doesn't jump right to summer anytime soon!

Below is a chart that will assist you in determining the time and method to get your favorite cool season vegetables off to a good start. For suggestions on varieties, see our fact sheet [HLA-6032](#) Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden in Oklahoma.

<u>Vegetable</u>	<u>Time to Plant*</u>	<u>Days to Harvest</u>	<u>Method of Planting</u>
Asparagus	Fall or Spring	-	Crowns
Beet	March	50-70	Seed
Broccoli	March	80-90	Plants
Cabbage	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Plants
Carrot	Feb. 15 to March 10	70-90	Seed
Cauliflower	Feb. 15 to March 10	70-90	Plants
Chard, Swiss	Feb. 15 to March 10	40-60	Seed
Kohlrabi	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-70	Seed
Lettuce, Head	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Seed or Plant
Lettuce, Leaf	Feb. 15 to March 10	40-70	Seed or Plant
Onion	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-120	Sets
Onion	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-120	Plants
Peas, green	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Seed
Potato, Irish	Feb. 15 to March 10	90-120	Tuber pieces 2-3 oz.
Radish	March 1 to April 15	25-40	Seed
Rhubarb	Fall or Spring	-	Crowns
Spinach	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-70	Seed
Turnip	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-60	Seed

\*These dates indicate planting times from southeast to northwest Oklahoma. Specific climate and weather may influence planting dates. For Cool-Season Vegetables, the soil temperature at the depth where the seeds are planted should be at least 40°F.

## Trees & Shrubs

- Prune spring flowering plants, if needed, immediately following their bloom period.
- Plant evergreen shrubs, balled and burlapped, and bare root trees and shrubs.
- Anthracnose control on sycamore, maple, and oak should begin at bud swell. ([EPP-7634](#)).
- Diplodia Pine Tip blight control on pines begins at bud swell.
- Chemical and physical control of galls (swellings) on stems of trees should begin now. ([EPP-7168](#) & [EPP-7306](#))
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. ([EPP-7306](#))
- The first generation of Nantucket Pine Tip Moth appears at this time. Begin pesticide applications in late March. ([EPP-7306](#))
- Control Eastern tent caterpillars as soon as the critters appear.

## **Fruits**

- Continue to plant strawberries, asparagus, and other small fruit crops this month.
- Start your routine fruit tree spray schedule prior to bud break. ([EPP-7319](#)).
- Remove winter mulch from strawberries in early March ([HLA-6214](#)).

## **Tree Care Issues Conference**

**March 22, 2018**

**Wes Watkins Center, OSU, Stillwater**

This conference is designed for arborists, nursery professionals, urban foresters, landscape managers, landscape architects, master gardeners and advanced hobbyists. For more information regarding the conference and registration, please visit <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/tree-care-issues>. Deadline for registration is postmarked by March 13, 2018.

## **Pruning Roses**

*David Hillock*

The pruning of roses varies according to flowering habit and plant vigor. Most Oklahoma roses should not be pruned before March 15. Pruning tends to cause new growth which is often killed by late spring freezes. However, most modern roses should be pruned annually. Prune to maintain plant shape, remove dead or diseased wood (often dark or blackened canes), and regulate desired flower size. If only a few large flowers are preferred, cut the plants more severely. Too much spring pruning can weaken plants. If a large number of average-sized flowers are preferred, only light or moderate pruning is necessary. Long-handled pruning clippers (loppers) and hand clippers are needed for pruning roses. A sharp, fine-toothed pruning saw is also useful for cutting large dead canes.

Leaves and stems grow from buds. Bud position determines the shape of the plant. Prune for an open-centered plant. Thus, make all cuts just above outward-facing buds. Make the cut slightly above and angling downward away from the bud. Remove branches that grow toward the center of the plant. When two branches cross, the smaller one should be removed. Any growth originating below the union with the understock should be removed from such budded roses as hybrid teas and floribundas. If the average number of leaflets on the stems of such roses is more than five, the cane is probably understock.

Hybrid tea roses usually require relatively severe pruning because of winterkill of the canes. In the spring, remove dead or diseased canes. Then, cut back remaining canes to six to 24 inches, depending on plant vigor and desired flowering.

Grandifloras, floribundas, and polyanthas require less pruning. Remove dead or diseased canes and shape the plant.

Ramblers and small flowered climbers that bloom only in the spring should be pruned immediately following bloom. Spring flowering roses and shrubs set flowering buds in late spring and summer. Remove canes that have flowered from the base or crown of the plant. Train or tie up developing new shoots.

Large flowered climbers that bloom only in the spring are also pruned right after flowering. Cut back side shoots that have flowered, and remove the oldest canes. Train up only enough new canes to cover the desired area and remove the rest. Remove only very weak or dead branches of climbers that bloom all summer. These climbers can be pruned lightly after the first burst of bloom. Heavy cutting of flowers, particularly with long stems, should be avoided during a plant's first year of growth. This will allow the plant to become established more readily. Remove all flowers or flower clusters just above the first five leaflet leaves when the petals begin to fall. Even when cutting flowers from established plants, do not remove more foliage than necessary. Let autumn roses produce hips (seed pods) to induce early freeze hardiness.

## **Pruning Blackberries**

*David Hillock*

Last fall brambles should have been thinned out by removing the spent canes and reducing the number of healthy canes to only 6 to 8 per plant. The remaining canes will produce fruit this season; they are what we call floricanes or flowering canes. These canes grew last season and were pruned at chest height in summer to encourage branching of lateral shoots. The side shoots are where fruit will be produced this summer. To encourage larger, higher quality berries, these lateral canes need to be pruned again in late winter from February through early March. Prune lateral branches to a length of about 12 inches. When making cuts, prune just above a bud rather than below. When canes are tipped just below a bud, the remaining short section of cane is prone to disease problems. Another way to combat disease is to collect and remove all pruned stems. Dead canes often harbor diseases and red-necked cane borers, so they need to be disposed of or burned rather than composted on site.

As the season progresses, new canes called primocanes will grow from the base of the plant. These should be tied to the trellis and tipped at chest height in summer. They will produce next year's fruit.

For more information on pruning blackberries see OSU Extension Factsheet [HLA-6215 Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden](#) .

## **Winter Damage to Broadleaf Evergreens**

*David Hillock*

Recently we've received some nice rain in our area, but before that it has been extremely dry. Because of the dry winter I have noticed a significant number of broadleaf plants affected by recent weather conditions. Winter burn seems to be the most common, which occurs on such plants as azalea, boxwood, holly, magnolia, euonymus, nandina, and viburnum, but it can affect narrow-leaved evergreens like pines and deciduous species as well. Winter burn is often misdiagnosed as an infectious disease or damage from excessively cold temperatures. Winter burn is caused from desiccation, which is a type of dehydration injury. When roots are in dry or frozen soil, water lost through transpiration cannot be replenished by the roots and dehydration occurs. Water loss through transpiration is normally low

during winter months, but it increases when plants are subjected to drying winds or are growing in warm sunny spots.

Symptoms of winter burn include scorching of leaf tips or outer leaf margins, complete browning of needles or browning from the needle tips downward, or death of terminal buds and /or twigs. Broadleaf evergreens affected by winter burn will likely survive and send out new shoots and leaves this spring, depending on the severity of the damage. Where death of tips and/or small twigs has occurred, simply prune back to live, undamaged tissue.

Several means of eliminating or minimizing winter burn may be used. Avoid planting broadleaved evergreens in areas of high wind exposure. Deep water plants during dry periods throughout winter months when temperatures remain above freezing for prolonged periods. Erect physical windbreaks. Burlap "walls" can help cut down wind and subsequent moisture loss to evergreen shrubs and small trees. Antitranspirants of various types are available, but have shown limited success under Oklahoma's climatic conditions.

## **Allium Millenium Selected as 2018 Plant of the Year®**

*David Hillock*

Who doesn't love having colorful butterflies in the landscape? Gardeners who are looking for a fabulous addition to their gardens this year, as well as a way to attract butterflies, should consider the *Allium* Millenium. This magnificent plant was selected by the Perennial Plant Association as the 2018 Perennial Plant of the Year®.

One reason this plant is such a wonderful choice for gardeners is because it blooms at a time when most of our gardens begin to decline. However, this low-maintenance, dependable perennial truly is an all-season plant that offers shiny foliage in spring through summer, with grass-like, glossy deep green leaves reaching 12 to 15 inches tall. In midsummer, two or three flower scapes rise above the foliage, with each scape producing two or three showy 2-inch spherical umbels of rose-purple florets that last up to four weeks.

What makes this plant a bit special is these umbels are completely round, not domed or hemispherical as seen in some *Allium* species.

*Allium* Millenium grows best in full sun, but in areas where heat is extreme, partial shade may be your best option. It grows best in well-drained soils and is relatively drought resistant. We all know how dry some Oklahoma summers can be. This plant's hardiness is USDA Zones 3 or 4 to 9. Oklahoma's zones include 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b and 8a, which makes our state a perfect place to grow it.

Not only is *Allium* Millenium a butterfly magnet, its sleek structure can complement many other growth habits. For those gardeners who enjoy cut flowers, these blooms will retain a blush of their summer color indoors. In addition, reseeding is much less of a problem than other *Alliums* and it has no serious insect or disease problems.

Leaf spot can occur in overcrowded growing conditions.

*Allium* Millenium has a fibrous root structure forming an ornamental herbaceous clump easily propagated by division. Once in the garden, it easily can be lifted and divided in either spring or fall. You can cut back the foliage in late fall.

The genus *Allium* contains more than 900 species in the northern hemisphere, but it probably is best known for a dozen or so species of culinary vegetables and herbs, including onion, garlic, leeks, shallots, scallions and chives.

As you plan your spring and summer garden, give consideration to *Allium* Millenium. This plant will be a great addition to your landscape.

## **Attracting Butterflies to the Garden**

*David Hillock*

Springtime is just around the corner and the gardens will soon be alive with many pollinating insects once again. Some of the most recognized are butterflies. Their striking appearance adds both color and activity to the most pleasing of landscapes. Attracting butterflies is not hard, but will take some planning. Creating habitats for butterflies is an exciting and rewarding experience. Here are some key components for attracting butterflies to your garden:

Sunny areas – butterflies need sunny, warm spaces to be active, plus, many of the plants that butterflies like require bright sunshine.

Splashes of color – butterflies are attracted to flowers by color. Groups of flowers are easier to locate than isolated plants.

Host plants – female butterflies lay their eggs only on certain host plants that will nourish the young caterpillars after they hatch. Grow those plants that supply food for the caterpillars (butterfly weed and other milkweeds, parsley, dill, fennel, rue, passion flower, and tulip tree).

Damp areas – butterflies cannot drink from open water. Wet sand, earth, or mud is the best watering holes.

Basking stones – butterflies often perch on stones to bask in the sun. Basking raises their body temperature so that they are able to fly and remain active.

So, plan now for a butterfly habitat in your landscape this spring and enjoy watching the beauty of nature unfold. For more information about landscaping for butterflies see our Extension fact sheet [HLA-6430 Landscaping to Attract Butterflies, Moths, and Skippers](#).