

This Month in the Garden

by Peggy Koppmann

Winter or spring? Freeze or thaw? Lions or lambs? Plant or wait? Zone? Frost?

Too many questions plague the March gardener, especially in the widely different areas of Erie County. Some suggestions here may be applicable early in the month; others need to wait for late March. Either way, it's finally time to get back out there.

Delphinium Delirium

– The National Garden Bureau has declared 2016 as The Year of the Delphinium. While the Pacific Giant and Magic Fountain hybrids are common around here, there are so many

what plants you need to divide and/or move to avoid the “polka dot look” in your garden. Use this early season to plan how to create drifts of varieties and avoid that “just plunk it there” look. Not only will you save money, but your garden will look more cohesive and have greater visual impact. See *theguardian.com Gardens: Planting in Drifts* for a comprehensive article on this garden art form.



others to choose from. Take a look at ‘Blue Butterfly’ from Bluestone Perennials, and ‘Guardian Blue’ and ‘Pagan Purple’ from Graceful Gardens. They will make a great backbone for your Gertrude Jekyll inspired garden.

Polka Dot Planning

– Now’s the time to think about

Some sources recommend first cutting back by half so that it’s easier to see what you are doing. Clean out stems and debris before you cut down to a few inches. This will allow new growth to emerge more easily. Tidy up the clump and top-dress around the crown. Northcoast Gardening has a very comprehensive article on this surgery, including a reminder to wear long sleeves! (*northcoastgardening.com*)

Finish the Job – It’s time to finish pruning, (in most cases), before

trees and shrubs begin to bud out. Remove dead, diseased, and rubbing branches; thin as needed to open up a tree canopy or the interior of dense shrubs. This early spring pruning results in vigorous new growth, resulting from the removal of the terminal buds that “hormonally suppress the growth of lateral buds lower on the branch. Thus, pruning that removes the terminal bud releases remaining buds to grow..... pruning to a lateral branch creates a new terminal that will function just as the old one you removed.” (See *ground-mag.com pruning trees and shrubs* for an excellent discussion of pruning.)

And then – Watch for the blooms of pussy willow, serviceberry and spicebush; continue pruning apple trees and grapevines; plant some pansies; start to gradually pull back mulch from roses; clean up any remaining foliage of iris; seed bare spots in the lawn; plant potatoes, peas, lettuce, radishes and carrots as soil conditions permit; scout for Viburnum beetles; check out the great selections of the Botanical Gardens Great Plant Sale that include some beautiful and unusual varieties you won’t find at local nurseries. (*buffalogardens.com*)

But, don’t Work or plant in wet soil; apply dormant oil spray after buds begin to swell; pull back mulch all at once; let the weeds get a head start; apply fertilizer to saturated lawns; forget to start some seedlings for the MG Plant Sale. 



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