

# Garden Club Horticultural Hints March 2019

## *Be Ready as Winter Loosens Its Grip!*

**Time to repot houseplants** – Now is a good time to report your houseplants, especially if you did not do so last fall. Remove any soil with salt build-up (the crusty stuff on top) and some of the old soil from around the roots. The pot should be only 1-2 inches larger than the current pot, clean, and with good drainage.

Most houseplants are happy with commercial or homemade potting mix if you are a do-it-your-selver (Google ‘Cornell potting mix’). Be certain to add sand to any mix when transplanting succulents or cacti and use small bark chunks for orchid pots. Once securely in the new home, water them with a dilute fertilizer solution to help them settle in and get off to a growing start.



**Cannas, begonias and dahlias** are best started in March – indoor – for earlier summer blooms. Use fresh potting mix and pots that will be large enough for the mature plants. Keep your bulbs indoors, watering them lightly until freezing nights have safely passed in early May.

**Growing from seed.** If you started flowers or vegetables indoors in January, thin those seedlings now, separating them into individual pots or in cold frames to give them enough room to develop properly.



**Feed houseplants.** After a winter of low light, start preparing your houseplants for their new season with a weak liquid fertilizer solution. Your goal is to encourage new growth as the days lengthen, but don't shock them with full-strength fertilizer treatments.

*How weak is a 'weak solution' of fertilizer? Here's a handy visual guide using a readily-available houseplant growth product.*



**Don't be in a rush to uncover** bulb beds, perennials, shrubs or roses you gave extra protection to last fall. While temperatures usually warm quickly at the end of the March, they can still be quite cold with the possibility of nasty snow and ice storms, especially in early April. And then there was a May snowstorm...

*Stay off soggy ground! Compacted soil means no tiny spaces for new roots to grow into, and no place for water to percolate through. Mother Nature reverses compaction by freezing and thawing. But wet spring soils can become as hard as concrete when walked upon. If you are leaving footprints as you walk on lawns, gardens or around trees and shrubs, you are compacting your soil. Stay on paths until the soil dries.*



**Invest in a soil thermometer** and begin checking soil temps as soon as your gardens begins to thaw. Lettuce, onions, spinach and parsnip seeds can be planted when the soil reaches 35°. At 40° you can add arugula, beets, cabbage, turnips and radishes as well as many Asian greens. But remember this is garden soil, not air temperature so be certain to push your thermometer into the ground a couple of inches and allow it a couple of minutes to get an accurate reading.



### What's your top seed?

Before joining others picking their seeds for March Madness, make certain you have ordered the flower and vegetable seeds for your summer garden!

**Build, paint and repair.** Waiting to get gardening is easier if you are working on gardening projects. Repaint and repair garden furniture. Clean out, refurbish or build bird houses before the birds return.