

Garden Club Horticultural Hints March 2020

Get set to start gardening!

Bring spring indoors. Force branches of witch hazel (which smell wonderful) forsythia, quince, cornus mas, fruit trees and magnolia. Remember when cutting the branches you are actually pruning, so keep the plant's overall shape in mind. Once indoors, make a fresh cut and place the branches in three inches of warm water with a preservative. Change the water regularly to prevent the growth of bacteria which can inhibit blooming. Once the flowers pop, bring them into a bright room and enjoy your early spring.



Witch hazel provides flowers of striking color and terrific scent



Beware of ticks. The lack of snow and persistent above-freezing temperatures this winter mean disease-bearing ticks are active and looking for a blood meal. Spray your clothing with a DEET-type insecticide and always check your clothing and skin as soon as you come indoors from working outside.



Did you dig out dahlias last fall? Get them ready to plant this month

You can start planting summer flowers and bulbs—in pots!

Get a head start on tender bulbs such as begonias, cannas, colacassia (elephant's ear), dahlia (shown at left) and ranunculus. Started indoors in pots, they will be larger and bloom sooner when you put them outdoors after the weather has warmed sufficiently. Check the planting details for individual bulbs or corms, but most can be potted now in a lightweight, well drained potting mix. When the shoots appear, move them to a site where they get several hours of sunlight a day. As the temperatures increase, increase their sunlight exposure.

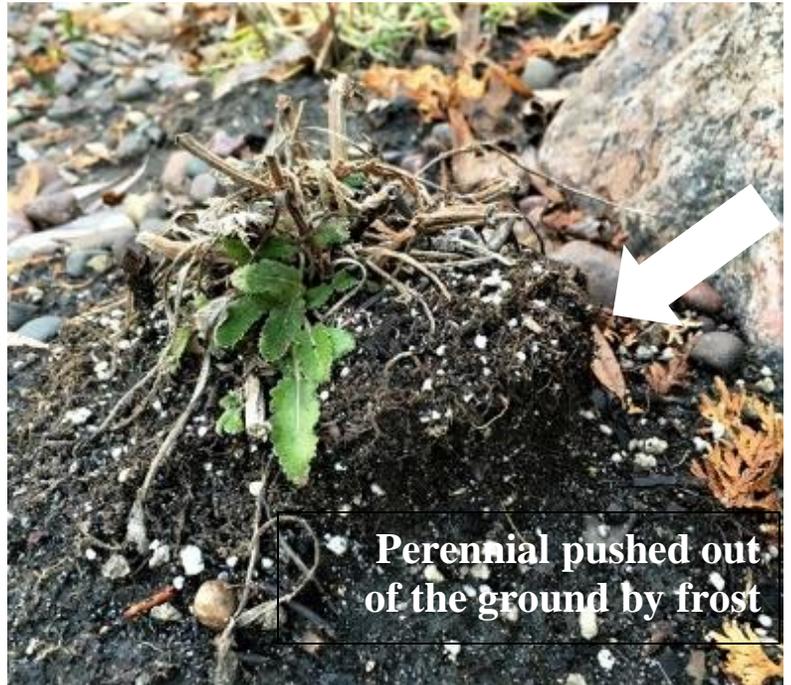


Use a nasty day to sharpen hand tools such as pruners, trowels and hoes. Clean, sharp tools will make your work easier and, in the case of pruners, ensure no damage to the shrubs you use them on. Send your mower out to be tuned and sharpened before the shops get busy.



Your carefully tended and well-groomed house plants could earn you a ribbon (or two) at the Boston Flower & Garden Show. Bring them into Seaport Trade Center after 1 p.m. on Sunday, March 8 to enter the amateur competition. There's no fee for entering — or for the bragging rights you'll earn. Full information on entering is at the bottom of the Amateur Horticulture section of <https://masshort.org/garden-event/boston-flower-show-2020/>.

While taking care of outdoor chores, look around your yard looking for **plants that have been heaved out of the ground by frost**. If it is possible, push them back into the soil. If the soil is still frozen and you cannot replant, cover the roots with four or more inches of fresh soil or mulch. But, make certain you make a note to yourself to plant it properly when the weather allows!



When the soil in your yard is dry enough not to leave footprints when walked on, collect the sticks, branches and debris from your lawn. Then, give it a good raking with a steel tined rake to remove dead grass, the dead leaves, and any other debris that has accumulated since the end of autumn



Cut back dead plant material that you had left standing over the winter. Remove the old stalks and leaves so the new growth will have a clear path for growing, blooming and brightening your yard come spring.

Written and created by Betty Sanders. For more horticultural suggestions for March and throughout the year, please visit www.BettyOnGardening.com