

What to do in the garden in March

Don't forget the 2017 Autumn Flower Show on the weekend of 4 and 5 March, at the Wesley Centre in Forrest

The Ornamental Garden

- Divide and plant bearded iris if you did not get around to the task in late spring.
- Deadhead annuals and perennials as flowers fade. Annuals past their best should be removed and added to the compost heap, but only if disease-free.
- Prepare areas or pots for planting spring bulbs later in the month or during April.
- Continue tying and thinning buds of dahlias and chrysanthemums.
- Prepare spare areas for planting spring annuals in the next few weeks.
- Choose and erect a trellis or frame and then sow sweet pea seeds.
- Check local garden centres for evergreen shrubs. Any purchases should be planted so that they establish before the cooler weather. Autumn is the ideal time to transplant any evergreen shrubs which may need relocating.
- Make a note of outstanding roses for future planting.
- Plant new trees, shrubs, climbers, annuals and perennials.
- Divide overgrown perennials, retaining vigorous fresh growth from the outside of the clump. Dianthus cuttings can be taken now and planted out in spring once cuttings have developed roots.
- Deadhead kangaroo paw flowers.

Garden Maintenance

- Fortnightly foliar-feeding with seaweed extract or fish emulsion is a useful way to keep your plants healthy and growing strongly.
- Complete planting of Asian greens, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower seedlings. Watch for caterpillars – fine insect-exclusion net is useful if slung over a frame.
- Remove vegetable crops as they mature, and harvest the last of the cucurbits.
- Record location of crops so that crops can be rotated, and if you don't intend to plant for a while, spread some lime.
- Freeze excess produce or make pickles, preserves, jams or relishes.
- Do not plant new citrus trees in the open garden now as the coming frosts may cause severe damage to young tender trees.
- Some apples and pears will be maturing and should be harvested to avoid bird damage. Pick pears when fully developed but still hard, and ripen indoors.
- Astringent persimmon should not be harvested until the birds take an interest in the fruit, usually during April–May. Only then should the fruit be clipped from the tree and taken indoors to finish ripening. Non-astringent persimmon can be eaten once they have coloured, but may still barely be ripe. Personal preference through the taste test is best.
- It is too early to pick Kiwi fruit as it will not ripen till early winter, after the first frosts.
- Mini vegetables grow quicker and are useful also in small gardens where space is precious.

The Kitchen Garden

- One of the busiest months of the year with crops maturing and others making good growth.
- Preparation for spring is a major task.
- Protect plants from grubs, snails and slugs.
- A little fertiliser should be added to the grass as the weather cools.
- If planning to plant or repair a lawn area, good preparation should be completed by the end of this month. Consider reducing the size of your lawn and use a drought tolerant grass, planting this while there is some warmth left in the soil. Newly-planted areas should not be allowed to dry out, to allow the new lawn to establish.
- Plan landscaping changes for the cooler weather to come.
- Monitor watering throughout the garden and, if rain has fallen, check that it has reached all areas.
- Sasanqua camellias will benefit from extra watering to help swell flower buds prior to coming into flower in coming weeks.
- Clear autumn debris to prevent overwintering of pests and diseases.
- Aphids will still be attracted to new growth so watch carefully for infestations and squash as numbers will increase rapidly if ignored.
- Check the lips of pots, a favourite hiding place for snails and slugs. Iron-based products are available and are safer if you have pets. Copper strips or heaped coffee grounds make an effective barrier.
- Prune the easy bleeders, such as stone fruit, as well as maples, birches and walnuts (if any pruning is necessary). Birches may be showing signs of drought stress so it's a good time to remove dead wood.
