

LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN PREP FOR EARLY SPRING

Even though we haven't reached the clear date for frost-free weather, April 15th for our area, there are many early spring tasks that can be performed in the landscape and garden now.

We are quickly approaching the time when the sap will again be flowing in our trees so now, before leaves appear and the scaffolding is easy to view, it is time to prune and trim our trees. Removing dead, damaged, and diseased branches, or ones that are crossing, will keep our trees looking good. The best-looking trees get plenty of attention during the dormant months of winter and early spring. Larger trees may require an arborist for pruning, but smaller ones can be pruned with a pole trimmer or pruning saw from the ground. It is also the time to prune back and shape summer or fall flowering ornamentals and roses. Use care with shrub roses while pruning to prevent the rose rosette disease.

Another task to accomplish now is the fertilization of trees, shrubs, and summer and fall flowering ornamentals. Do not prune or fertilize spring flowering ornamental such as azaleas, lilacs, hydrangeas or forsythias, since flower buds could be pruned off and fertilization before bloom set can prevent blooms from forming and putting on a good display in the next month. A slow release fertilizer like Osmocote or Milorganite will provide adequate nutrients. Nitrogen is essential for new and established plants to grow with vigor and sustainability in the upcoming hot summer months. These fertilizers also contain essential micronutrients plants need to grow and thrive. Even without a soil test, we know nutrients applied last year have most likely decomposed or leached away. Compost and other organic amendments can be applied in a 2-inch layer and worked into the top 6 inches to continue to build up even rich soils.

Finally, it is a great time to pick weeds in our gardens while they are small and before they go to seed. Also, time to transplant perennials and ornamental shrubs before new growth begins and soil temperatures warm.

Additional resources for your information:

- How to find a good arborist:

<http://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/findanarborist>

- Rose rosette disease:

<http://factsheets.okstate.edu/documents/epp-7329-rose-rosette-disease/>

- Pruning ornamental trees, shrubs and vines:

<http://factsheets.okstate.edu/documents/hla-6409-pruning-ornamental-trees-shrubs-and-vines-2/>

- Soil test instructions:

<http://www.tulsamastergardeners.org/lawn--garden-help/ewExternalFiles/soil%20test%20instructions.pdf>