



The wind is blowing, the sun is shining and a storm approaches. Spring is coming, roaring in on a chilly March wind. The promise is everywhere, life renews. The air is full of birdsong and an extraordinary, lush feeling of gentle warmth emanating from the earth. The early bulbs are in full sway of bloom. Daffodils, Freesias, and Dutch iris. The heavenly scent of citrus fills the air and mingles with the provocative smell of warming soil.

The fulfillment of life begins again and we all steam head first into the long awaited joy of Spring. The Winter gods did their best and rain came. There is nothing better to regenerate our plants and attitude than Mother Nature at her very best. The deserts and many of our badly burned areas are awash in colorful, rarely seen native bloom. Lupine is especially provocative this year, it seems to have emerged everywhere in the back country of San Diego county. It is glorious!

If you were successful in planting a vegetable patch this past winter and have several plantings of peas, you may need to think about staking them before the last-gasping winds of Winter blow them over. Sweet Peas will need the same consideration. Newly planted trees will need stronger stakes, but some help will be needed.

One of the surest signs of coming Spring is the emergence of those pesky weeds. Time to get down on your knees and get to pulling them up before they seed and spread havoc in your yard. It is an enjoyable occupation when the sun shines and warms the back of your shoulders as you toil. A little everyday and soon all will be under control once again. A good layer of mulch will keep the weeds at bay and so much easier to pull out once it is spread.

In my yard the joy of waiting, watching and finally seeing the first bloom of rose is special every year. This one is no exception. All of my roses are growing like never before (it seems). Planted two new climbers and a Hybrid Tea this past January and they are sending out buds already. An old stand-by that I grew from a cutting is the first to bloom this year. *Sultry* is a soft orange with yellow highlighting. For years it was in a can, but finally made it into the ground about three years ago and has never looked back. It is strong and healthy. All the complimentary roses around it are just about ready to perform as well. *Julia Child*, *Carol Burnett* and *Sunsprite* are just itching to perform. What fun. The climbers are a new variation of *Joseph's Coat* called *Jacob's Robe* and is



a mélange of Mediterranean colors --- red, orange and yellow. They will grace a huge trellis that leads to the backyard and are in a warm, sunny location. In fact, the entire area I have tried to keep in those warm, rich tones that the afternoon sun seems to make extraordinarily vibrant. Fact is, I can hardly wait to see the effect these new roses will have. Rose Society's are such a wealth of information and readily share it with the public. Ours is particularly active and give demonstrations at Balboa Park often and they are involved with a docent enhanced site at the Del Mar/San Diego Fairgrounds come June. We can all learn something from such expertise. Hope you have such a society near you.

Have you ever tried to build a dry river bed in your yard? Just the sight of it suggests water flow. It does not take much time to insert one into your garden. A mere hint will add character and depth to your landscape. A collection of various size stones and pebbles can create a pseudo riverbed in hours. You can place it onto thick plastic or landscape fabric to follow the contour you choose. Or, you can just begin placing them along the area you want and slowly watch it grow. You can change and modify as you go along adding larger sized stones along the edges. Give it a meandering look and make sure it does not look too rigid. Let some of the pebbles sort of 'fade away' along the edges, then in others make it looked stacked up like the actual curve in a meandering river. We have all looked down upon such a river as we drive thru the mountains. The best part of this is the flexibility of your efforts. You can always change your mind and move a few stones or add more. It really is a fun project and the end result can be very peaceful.

After you have worked hard in the garden, perhaps a bit of tea would be in order. There is a Ginger-mint plant that I found and it makes the most marvelous, restorative tea; perfect for an after-garden work rest. If that cannot be found, just a slice of fresh ginger and a squeeze of lemon juice with hot water can perform the same miracle.

March is the last month to put in some winter vegetables. Consider planting some beets, carrots, leaf lettuce, peas, potatoes and Swiss chard. It is also the month to begin warm-season vegetable plantings, they include: early corn, tomatoes, snap beans and summer squash. Did you know that you can also plant winter squash in spring? They are called winter squash because they can keep for long periods of time and are available in the winter. Try some. Some of the benefits of growing summer vegetables is the mélange of cooking possibilities. A favorite in this household is a simple sauté of fresh veggies (squash, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, beans), and whatever else is nice and put it onto a bed of fresh pasta. Grind a tad of fresh Pepper over it, some fresh grated Queso Seco and a medley of fresh herbs. Truly delightful and always different. Try it with different pastas and cheese. It also pairs nicely in a salad of tossed greens and a simple vinaigrette the next day if there are any leftovers.



Here is Mary Crowell and her words for those of you in the north.

Mary, Mary, How Does Your Garden Grow? by Mary Crowell

March is such a fabulous time to sit in the garden, after all those Feb. rains, I cannot remember a winter and early spring like we have had this year. Complaining about the rain makes me remember how much we really need the water, as our climate is changing. It is in spring when the garden is at its peak, the time when one can get absorbed in the sights and smells of the greenery and flowers to come. It is also the time to reflect and watch the birds and butterflies as you weed and look at the lush new growth.

MARCH 12-16 will be the fantastic SF Flower and Garden Show at the Cow Palace. Anyone interested in any aspect of gardening shouldn't miss this spectacular event. The theme this year is "Live Beautifully. Live Outdoors". It is 5 acres of extraordinary gardens, free presentations and seminars on three different stages, with

vendors galore. My state garden club, CGCI will be represented in the lobby this year, look for my designs, one a mobile. Check out the schedule at <http://www.gardenshow.com>.

March in your garden is a time of activity, it is not hard to resist getting out on those sunny and balmy days, paper work goes by the wayside in our house even though tax time is approaching fast. Hopefully you have already applied acid fertilizer for those citrus trees, camellias and azaleas along with an all-purpose one for the rest of the garden. If you planted the fall bulbs, you should be getting an array of color right about now, my daffodils and grape hyacinths were up in Feb.! Now you may safely prune those plants that badly needed a haircut last month. Keep those trees healthy by raking the leaves and pulling any grass beneath them as the grass takes away the nutrients from the trees. Some hardy perennials to consider might be campanulas, penstemon, phlox, mimulus, hellebores, delphiniums, salvias, and geraniums, especially the scented ones. I love to plant the summer bulbs in Mar to get the blooms of glads, watsonias, agapanthus, anemones, cannas, begonias, ranunculus and dahlias (tubers). When you read gardening books such as *Sunset Western Gardening Book* find your appropriate zone. Put out snail bait such as Sluggo as we seem to be overrun with them right about now or you can make the midnight run with the flashlight or put out beer in small lids to drown those lushes! To get rid of aphids on roses, dig in systemic rose care products around the base every 6 weeks and get rid of the ants!!

Container plants seem to be my personal favorites and it is fun to find odd artifacts that can be made into interesting dish gardens, by creating drainage. There are some metal baskets and kitchen strainers that have natural drainage and make lovely containers for hanging baskets. Containers can provide colorful impact for the garden, a small balcony or patio and are portable. Staging containers around your garden is a way to spotlight them to best advantage and are an easy way to have an instant vegetable garden using a trellis to grow beans or peas. Using containers on your front porch is a great welcoming feature.

Perennials have long lasting appeal even when they are no longer in bloom as many have interesting structure and seed heads. Try some of the following that provide structure: *Phlomis*, *Veronicastum*, *Thalictrum*, *Eryngium*, *Filipendula*, *Salvia*, *Limonium*. Plants that provide interesting seed heads: *Aster*, *Monarda*, *Sanguisorba*, *Rudbeckia*, *Solidago*, *Persicaria*, *Sedum telephium*, *Echinacea*, *Helenium*, *Kirengeshoma*.

Thanks Mary and thanks to all of you. Enjoy this glorious Spring. jb