

The Home Stretch

Written by Alice Massey

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 09:51



We're almost there. Any day now our blissfully short winter will be a mere memory. It didn't always feel short to me; a friend visiting from up north chastised me recently because I said it was cold. She reminded me of those who are still snowed in, those who will not see their gardens for many weeks.

It's time now to cut back any remaining dead twigs on perennials and on shrubs that might have had some cold damage. Hold off pruning the azaleas until after they bloom, but feel free to snip off any of those stray branches that stick up like cowlicks. You can shape your camellias as soon as they are finished flowering. If you didn't get around to dividing your perennials in the fall, do it now so the plants can become established before the weather heats up. Winter's rains washed significant amounts of mulch away in my garden and it could use a fresh layer. The citrus trees will get their first application of fertilizer this month and I'll be sure to provide plenty of water if rain is scarce when they start blooming. Citrus need adequate moisture as those little fruit are forming. Annuals and vegetable starts will be showing up around town, but resist the urge to buy any other than veggies like cabbage and broccoli, which prefer cold temperatures. Most annuals and tender vegetables like tomatoes will not put on any growth until the soil warms up, and that means late March. It is best to be patient; buy and plant later and you will be rewarded with larger and healthier plants this summer. If you have any pests like scale on your shrubs this is a good time to apply a dormant oil which will smother the insects and their eggs. Read the label and find one made from a vegetable oil. You can never go wrong having your soil tested. It is the best \$10 you can spend before you invest any more on plants or supplements for your garden.

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Garden events are plentiful during the spring although you might have to travel to participate in some. First up on March 14th is the **Carolina Yards Gardening School** in Charleston because “The More you Know the More you Grow”. For more information see:

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1675574>

Do you miss seeing tulips and hyacinths? Moore Farms Botanical Garden in Lake City is having their annual **Bulbapalooza** on March 20 and 21. Over 40,000 bulbs should put on quite a show. Brent of Brent Becky’s Bulbs will be speaking.

<http://www.moorefarm.org>

msbg.org/events/bulbapalooza-garden-open

If you would like to make a weekend out of it, a

Spring Extravaganza

will be held in nearby Florence on March 21. Helen Yoest, author and regular contributor to *Carolina Gardner Magazine*,

is the keynote speaker. The afternoon offers garden tours. Call Anne at 843 374-1500 for more information.

Next up is **Walter Reeves** of the SC and GA public TV show “Your Southern Garden.” He will speak at the TCL auditorium in Beaufort on March 26th, watch for more details from the Lowcountry Master Gardeners.

It will be difficult to decide which direction to go on the second weekend of April. The Charleston Horticultural Society’s **Plantasia** starts on the 10th and runs through the 11th with a tremendous plant sale interspersed with outstanding speakers and workshops. For info: www.chashortsoc.org

Also on the 11th is **Plantapalooza** (who thinks up these names?) in Athens, GA. This is a 3 for 1 event with programs and plant sales at the Georgia Botanical Garden, the Trial Gardens at UGA and the UGA Horticulture Organization. There will be new plant introductions that are not yet available elsewhere, native plants and some very rare plants. Local nurseries will offer a discount to participants.

<http://www.visitathensga.com/included/events/index.cfm?action=displayDetail&eventid=15321>

So many activities, so much to do, which direction to go in? Fortunately there is always plenty to look at right here at home, like my neighbor Diane’s lovely quince. It is covered with salmon

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flowers right now; that's a good indication that our spring gardening weather is just around the corner.