



## Safe Gardening Tips

Physical activity can be good for your physical and mental health. Possible health benefits of physical activity include lowered body fat and blood pressure, stronger bones, and improved self-esteem. It is common to consider physical activity as going to the gym, but gardening is another way to be active. As with any physical activity, there is also risk for injury when gardening. A way to minimize risk is to keep in mind proper movement and tool use. Today I am going to provide tips to help you avoid injury when out in the garden.

Don't do any gardening task that you are not prepared for. Activities to prepare may include exercises such as squats, toe raises, lunge stretches, or bicep curls. When lifting heavy objects while gardening, squat and use your leg muscles rather than your back. When weeding, it is best to kneel or sit down rather than bend over, and consider using a mat or knee pads to provide cushion. One foot should be kept on the ground for support when kneeling, with leg positions alternating every few minutes. It helps to break a large task into several smaller ones. This avoids overexertion and gives more opportunities for hydration. It is also a good idea to avoid physical repetition by switching up activities about every 20 minutes. Always keep in mind your personal limits.

A raised bed reduces how much you have to hunch over to interact with the garden. Using tools with proper length and ergonomic handles will assist in keeping your wrist and back straight when using each tool. Make sure to always use the correct tool for the job.



For information on exercises you can perform using items found in and around the home, see Extension Publication P4078, *Getting In Shape to Garden*.

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## Growing Herbs

Herbs are a special group of plants used for flavoring and scents. Many herbs used in flavoring foods and teas (culinary herbs) can be grown in Mississippi gardens. Most herbs should be grown in full sun, but a few tolerate light shade. They prefer a well-drained soil of medium fertility with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. An organic mulch in summer benefits the plants.

Herbs that can be grown in Mississippi are annuals that are planted every year, biennials that are planted in the fall and flower the following year, hardy perennials that come back year after year, and tender perennials that may survive a mild winter but often need to be treated as annuals or protected from freezing temperatures.

You can start most popular herbs from seeds. Many of the perennial herbs are propagated by stem cutting, layering, or crown divisions. Annual, and some perennial, herb plants are sold at nursery and garden centers, and seeds and plants are offered by many mail order catalog companies.

Because herbs are used in very small amounts, just a few plants of each type may be enough. If you want a large quantity of a particular herb, such as sweet basil for making pesto, plant the herb in the vegetable garden. Otherwise, prepare a small area especially for herbs so that they can be enjoyed for their appearance as well as fragrance.

Herbs have few pests, which is good, because there are few if any pesticides approved for use on these plants. When planting herbs in the vegetable garden, protect them from pesticides used on vegetables.

Grow herbs started from containers, so they can be set in the garden without disturbing the roots. Borage and dill are two herbs that do not transplant well if bare-root. Either scatter seeds in the garden where these herbs are to grow, or start plants in containers.

The flavors and scents of herbs are caused by oils in the plant tissue. High fertilization, excess moisture, and shade result in low oil content and weak flavor. The oil content in many herbs is at its highest just before the plants begin to flower.



# Garden Calendar: March

## Planting

- Plant new roses.
- Broad-leaved Evergreens such as Magnolia and Holly can be set out at this time.
- Plant cold weather annuals: Sweet William, English Daisies, Pansies, and Calendulas.
- Divide Mondo Grass and Liriope. Divide Cannas, Chrysanthemums, Coreopsis, Phlox, and Obedient Plant.
- Start seeds for Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, and Eggplant. Set out Thyme, Lemon Balm, Oregano, Chives, Sage, and Winter Savory.
- Sow seeds of Johnny Jump-ups, Sweet Peas, Larkspur, Forget-me-nots, and Baby Blue Eyes.
- Flowering shrubs may be moved at this time. Larger shrubs should be moved with a ball of dirt and smaller shrubs may be moved bare-rooted.
- This is the best month to move Crape myrtles.
- Lawns may be sodded at this time. Plant Gladiolus throughout this month for continuous bloom. Plant Hostas.
- Caladiums can be started in outdoor containers as soon as weather warms.



## Fertilizing

- Fertilize all the garden except acid-loving plants.
- Topdress Camellias with azalea-camellia fertilizer.
- Lime Peonies, Clematis, and Boxwoods.



## Pest Control

- Spray new rose leaves for black spot weekly.

## Pruning

- Prune roses at this time. Remove dead and weak canes. Properly dispose of clippings.
- Prune Crape Myrtles and Altheas.
- Prune evergreens for shape and size as early in the month as possible.
- Cut English Ivy back very hard. It will come back very nicely in the spring.
- Trim Mondo Grass and Liriope with lawn mower set on highest setting (6 inches). Dispose of trimmings.

## Mulch

- Replenish mulch around Azaleas and Camellias.

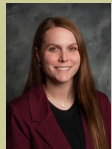
## Miscellaneous

- Dispose of fallen Camellia blossoms to prevent blight.
- Rake up seed hulls from under bird feeders. They will smother new growth.
- Remove dead flowers from Tulips and Daffodils. Do not cut foliage before it turns yellow and dies.



## In Bloom

Bluebells, Chionodoxa, Daffodil, Hyacinth, early Iris, Pansies, Violet, Carolina Jasmine, Azaleas, Camellias, Forsythia, Pearl Bush, Photinia, Flowering Quince, Spirea, flowering fruit trees (Crabapple, Cherry, Pear, and Peach), Oriental Magnolia, and Redbud.



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## Soil Organic Matter

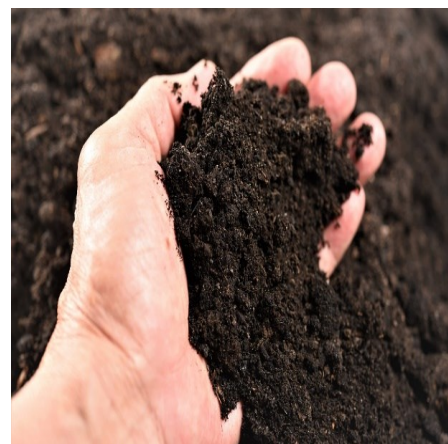
Healthy soil is essential when it comes to growing and maintaining healthy crops and backyard gardens. One way to help keep soil healthy is to ensure there is adequate amounts of soil organic matter.

What is soil organic matter (SOM)? Organic matter in the soil is composed of anything that once lived. It includes plant and animal remains in various states of decomposition, cells and tissues of soil organisms, and substances from plant roots and soil microbes.

Benefits of soil organic matter:

- Provide plants with nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous, and sulfur
- Help fight plant diseases and pests by providing habitats for soil organisms
- Easier for plants to root in soil to find air, water, and nutrients
- In dry, sandy soils, helps hold water
- In clayey, wet soils, help with draining and oxygen availability
- Provides a holding place for nutrients in soil that plants need

How can you maintain soil organic matter? To retain a proper SOM level, more organic matter needs to be added to the soil than is depleted from it. Organic matter is removed from the soil when crops are harvested, heavy tillage happens, and soil erosion occurs. How can soil organic matter be increased? Compost, cover crops, plant residues, organic fertilizer, and other organic materials that are decomposed by microbes are great ways to add organic matter back into the soil.



How can you maintain soil health to reduce soil nutrient loss?

- Lessen the amount of tilling done to soil
- Use cover crops
- Keep soil in place with mulch
- Create a buffer around garden to minimize runoff

If soils are lacking nutrients, adding organic matter may be a great way to help improve soil quality. Maintaining proper organic matter from year to year is essential to keeping healthy soils and healthy crops.





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## Cold-Damaged Plants and Turf

It's been an unusual year for cold weather in our area. I'm not sure how much you like snow but, I'm certainly neither a fan of snow nor cold weather in general. I saw more than my share of snow while living in Oklahoma... where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain. Yes, the wind blows incessantly, much like the lyrics of Rogers and Hammerstein's musical suggests, adding fuel to the "would be welcomed" fire of bitter cold. Here in the deep South, we generally see our coldest temperatures in January and February and, unfortunately, plants can be damaged by low temperatures. But, cold-damaged plants can often recover.



In the January issue of the 'County Gardeners Extension Express' newsletter two articles referenced the need to water plants before a freeze to add protection from radiant heat via soil moisture. But, what about after a freeze? After a freeze, check the soil around your plants. Plants may not be getting the water they need if the soil has dried out or if the water in the soil is frozen. Watering the area can help defrost the soil and provide your plants with an available source of moisture. Even injured plants need water. Luckily for us, we've gotten a sufficient amount of rainfall to eliminate the need for watering at this point in time.

While you may be tempted to add a little fertilizer to your plants to help speed their recovery hold off. If you fertilize too early you could encourage new growth before cold weather has gone. It's best to wait until spring, as new growth begins, to apply the fertilizer application. Once the danger of frost has passed, an application of fertilizer can help speed recovery.

Don't prune cold-damaged plants right away. The dead foliage looks bad, but will help insulate plants from further injury. Keep in mind, dormant tissue looks much like dead tissue in many instances. In the spring, assess the extent of the damage by scraping the bark with your fingernail. Cold-injured wood will be black or brown under the bark. To be certain where to prune, wait until plants begin to sprout new growth. In other words, be patient!



Herbaceous plants like impatiens and begonias that are damaged by the cold may collapse. If this happens, it's best to cut them down and remove the plants to prevent fungal or bacterial problems from arising as they decay.

Seeing your lawn turn brown in late fall into early winter is a normal part of your lawn's winter dormancy. Come spring time your lawn should rebound and begin producing new green growth. But when hard freezes hit, your turfgrass may be injured, especially lawns already stressed. Unlike bermuda and zoysia, neither St. Augustine nor centipede are cold tolerant grasses with St. Augustine being the least tolerant. Hence, why they aren't grown much further than northern Mississippi.

Much like your landscape plants, hold off on fertilizing your lawn until soil temperatures have increased enough to promote a nice green-up. Although it's weather dependent, this usually occurs in April. You may see some signs of light green-up early in the year but, hold off on fertilizing due to the potential of a late freeze damaging new growth. If your lawn, or areas of your lawn, does not recover in the spring, you may have to replace some of the grass with sod, sprigs, plugs, or seed depending on your grass type. Again, be patient!





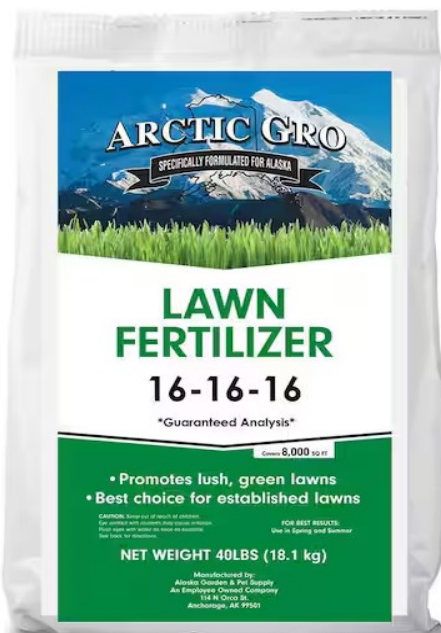
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## Lawn Fertilizers

Lawns are now beginning to show spring growth. Be careful not to push the grass by forcing early growth with lots of fertilizer. If fertilizer is put on too early, it will feed winter weeds and not the turf. A good rule of thumb to follow is to apply fertilizer after you have mowed your turf three times, not necessarily mowing weeds for aesthetic reasons but mowing growing turfgrass. This is because there is typically a 4–6-week delay in root activation after the grass begins to show green growth. Typically, this begins in April in the coastal counties and into May moving northward. This is when you should begin to fertilize your lawn.

A **soil test is recommended** to determine your soils nutrient levels to ensure application of proper nutrients, and only apply what it actually needed. Now is a great time to soil test to know exactly what you need to apply and also for possible liming recommendations to adjust soil pH.

Fertilizer analyses are listed on the bag as percentages of Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potassium (N-P-K). Always in that order. To convert the particular fertilizer product you have available into units of nitrogen, divide the soil sample recommended amount of the nutrient by the percentage of that nutrient found in the product you have available. For example, most applications you will want to apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 ft<sup>2</sup>, divide the desired 1 pound by the percentage of that nutrient found in the product, .13 in the case of a 33-0-0 product. (1lb N/.33 N=3 lbs. of actual fertilizer product to equal 1 pound of nitrogen).



Along with fertilizer applications, cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Cutting grasses that need to be left tall is a common mistake. Choose an even higher cut for grass in shade. Sharpen your mower blade before the season and shoot for once a month while the turf is actively growing to ensure a quality cut which can help prevent disease and insect damage. Replace that old oil with new and stale gas with fresh before you start your mower this spring.

Refer to MS State Extension Publication 1322, 'Establish and Manage Your Home Lawn' for more detailed information or you may call your local Extension Service to help answer your questions.



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## Starting Seeds for Spring



With a cold winter still lingering, the last thing you may have on your mind is starting your spring garden. But, if you have considered starting your own transplants, now is the time. Some people think seed starting can be a difficult and daunting task, not to mention, costly. However, while it can be challenging, there are many benefits to starting your own seeds. And with a few tips and tricks, your hard work will be rewarded, and you might save a little money.

A good plan is a great way to start a successful garden. So, make sure you have a good idea of what you want to grow and any companions you might want to incorporate. Make sure to account for seeds that may fail to germinate. The most common plants that require March seed starting are tomatoes, hot peppers, bell peppers, and eggplant. You may also consider companion flower seeds such as marigolds, calendulas, and pansies. If you consider the planting time for your zone and the germination period of the seed you are starting, that will ensure you know when the best start time. Many of these types of seeds require 6-8 weeks before transplanting. (see planting dates on the MSU Extension website for more information).

Once you determine what seeds you will be starting then you will need planting trays. There are lots of plastic options on the market, but Biodegradable egg cartons can make a great alternative, and they allow you to plant without root stress. You can find humidity domes at your local nursery supply, or plastic wrap can be used in lieu of a plastic dome. You may also opt for UV lights, but a warm windowsill with plenty of light will also suffice.



The most important thing is the soil you choose. Garden soils are not right for seed sprouting so make sure you choose a soilless, peat-based mix. Controlling the moisture content is crucial for successful germination. When your medium is prepared, plant seeds at their recommended depth and water; but be sure not to over water. Whatever light source you choose, make sure your trays are in a warm place. Heating pads work great too, if you can control the temperature. Make sure to keep your seeds covered and monitor the moisture. You want the medium to be moist but not soggy. Misting regularly ensures you don't overwater.

Lastly, it is impossible for even the most practiced gardener to keep up with their seedlings without them being properly marked and popsicle sticks make great markers! Follow specific transplanting guidelines for each plant. If there is no longer a danger of frost and a set of true leaves are present, then chances are, your seedlings are ready for transplanting!

See Extension Publication P3437, *Calendar of Home Gardening Chores* & P3616, *The Mississippi Vegetable Gardener's Guide* for more information on growing a successful spring garden.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

| DATE            | EVENT   |
|-----------------|---|
| March 1         | <b>SHIITAKE MUSHROOM WORKSHOP</b><br>Crosby Arboretum, 9:30—10:45 AM or 1:00—2:15 PM. Presented by Donna Beliech, MSU Extension. This is a hands-on experience of drilling and inoculating a hardwood bolt with Shiitake spawn. \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register at <a href="http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page">http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page</a>   |
| March 6         | <b>PINE BELT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION MEETING</b><br>The Pine Belt Beekeepers Association meeting will be held at the Lamar County Extension office beginning at 6 PM.  |
| March 3 -<br>24 | <b>PINE BELT BEEKEEPERS BEGINNING BEEKEEPER SERIES</b><br>Mondays, 6:30 pm Lamar County Extension Office, Purvis with Hands-on field day scheduled for March 22 <sup>nd</sup> beginning at 11 am. Call Lamar County Extension Office for more details. (Flyer was in the January issue)   |
| March 8         | <b>CRITTERS IN THE COMPOST!</b><br>Crosby Arboretum, 10:00—11:00 AM. Paul Andres outlined the physics and chemistry of basic composting, will discuss how you can work with “critters” to create thriving compost. \$3 members, \$6 non-members. Register at <a href="http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page">http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page</a>  |
|                 | <b>SMART LANDSCAPES: USING NATIVES PLANTS IN THE HOME LANDSCAPE</b><br>Crosby Arboretum, 1:00—2:30 PM. Learn about the many benefits of using native plant species in your landscape with Arboretum Director, Pat Drackett. Free to members, \$10 non-members. Register at <a href="http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page">http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page</a>  |
| March 11        | <b>HANCOCK-HARRISON FORESTRY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING &amp; PROGRAM</b><br>Hancock-Harrison CFWA will host it’s Annual Meeting and Program at the County Farm Road Shelter, 15035 County Farm Rd, Gulfport at 6:00 PM with guest speaker Dr. Andrea De Stefano speaking on Pineywoods Cattle research. Call Harrison County Extension to preregister.   |
|                 | <b>SUSTAINABLE HOME LAWN MAINTENANCE</b><br>Lamar County Extension office, 216 Shelby St, Purvis beginning at 6:00 PM. Call 601-794-3910 by March 6th to register. See flyer in this newsletter for more details.   |
| March 13        | <b>LAWN MANAGEMENT: PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR HOMEOWNERS</b><br>Hosted by Harrison County Extension. This will be a FREE, online via ZOOM presentation beginning at 1:00 PM. See flyer for details. The link to join the program is <a href="https://msstateextension.zoom.us/j/94110120205">https://msstateextension.zoom.us/j/94110120205</a>   |
| March 15        | <b>BEGINNER BEEKEEPERS SHORT COURSE</b><br>7:00 AM—4:00 PM at the Pearl River County Extension office. Preregistration is required. See flyer in this newsletter for more details.  |
|                 | <b>ETHNOBOTANY AND MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR GARDENS OF THE SOUTHEAST</b><br>Crosby Arboretum, 10:00—11:30 AM. Jennifer Blanchard at Louisiana State University and has developed a new course focused on the native indigenous plants of Louisiana. \$6 members, \$12 non-members. Register at <a href="http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page">http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page</a>  |
| March 16        | <b>PINE NEEDLE BASKET MAKING WITH A WOOD CENTER</b><br>Crosby Arboretum, 9:30 AM—12:30 PM or 1:00—4:00 PM. In this popular workshop led by skilled basket maker Denine Jones, participants will create a pine needle basket designed around a wooden center (provided). Ages 14 and over. \$25 members, \$30 non-members. Register at <a href="http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page">http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page</a> |
| March 21-<br>22 | <b>CROSBY ARBORETUM SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE</b><br>10:00 AM—NOON (members enter at 9:00 AM); Grab a cart (or bring your own) and browse our outstanding selection of native plants for your spring planting projects. Free admission. Use Arboretum Service Entrance and follow signage. Sale will take place on our loop drive behind the Visitor Center.   |





# SUSTAINABLE HOME LAWN MAINTENANCE

March 11 2025

6:00 pm

216 Shelby Street Purvis MS 39475



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Topics Include:

- Turf Selection
- Mowing
- Fertilization
- Weed Control
- Insect/Disease

**CALL: (601)794-3910 to RSVP prior to March 6th**

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# Lawn Management

## Practical Solutions for Homeowners

### March 13, 2025



Tim Ray with Harrison County Extension will host a Lawn Management program on Thursday, March 13th from 1:00 PM—4:00 PM online via Zoom. This program is FREE to the public but registration is required during sign-in.

In this program, we will:

- Learn to identify turfgrass species and it's importance for proper management.
- Develop a common sense turf management plan.
- Discuss input management (water, fertilizer, etc.) and ways to help decrease those inputs.
- Learn the cultural practices and required maintenance for each grass type.
- Be familiar with practical pest management (weed, insect, disease) solutions for home lawns.
- Develop a simple understanding of pesticide labels as they relate to pests and turf species.

To join the program, follow the link <https://msstateextension.zoom.us/j/94110120205> or email [tim.ray@msstate.edu](mailto:tim.ray@msstate.edu) to receive the link via email.

Meeting ID: 941 1012 0205



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Tel: 228.865.4227

WWW.EXTENSION.MSSTATE.EDU

**\*\*\* We humbly appreciate your support of Mississippi State University Extension and especially the support and feedback you have provided for this newsletter. We have been asked to streamline our mailouts (USPS) as much as possible and move towards email in order to save costs. As you are aware, everything has increased in price and that includes postage. We ask that IF you are able to receive these newsletters and other information from Extension by email, please contact your local Extension office to provide that information (County emails and phone numbers are on the front page). Your emails will not be shared. We also understand that some do not use email and that is fine. You will continue to receive these newsletters and other information by USPS. Please understand we cannot control when you will receive this or other relevant information by USPS and some dates may have past for workshops and programs of which you may have interest. We thank you for your understanding and again, for your support of Mississippi State Extension.\*\*\***

If you wish to no longer receive this newsletter or other information from Extension, please contact your county Extension office.

# Beginner Beekeepers Short Course



Saturday, March 15, 2025

7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Pearl River County Extension Office  
835 Highway 26 West, Poplarville, MS

\$10 per person pre-registration fee  
(make checks payable to Pam Hogan and put for  
Beekeeper Short Course on the for line of check)  
due by Friday, March 7, 2025.

\$15 per person registration at the event

Please pre-register so adequate  
materials and supplies will be  
available for participants.

Lunch will be on your own.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Everything you need to start beekeeping in a one-day course
- Afternoon activities will be in the bee yard! All attendees are encouraged to wear long pants, closed toe shoes or boots and bring a long sleeve shirt.
- If you have a bee jacket, feel free to bring it. If not, veils will be available as long as they last.



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Mississippi State University Extension will provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities or special needs. Please contact our office at 601-403-2280 or eddie.smith@msstate.edu prior to a program or event to request reasonable accommodation. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

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Bring or mail this portion of the form with your check or money order by Friday, March 7, 2025, to Pearl River County Extension Office, 835 Highway 26 West, Poplarville, MS 39470.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_