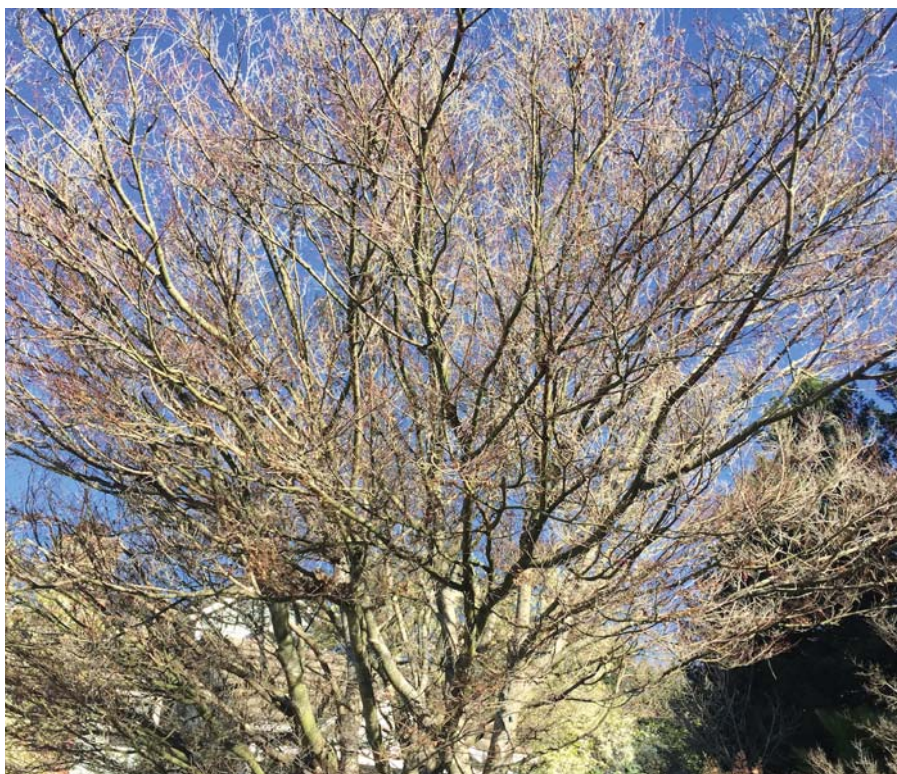


# March on and spring forward!

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*Bare Branches of Japanese maple remind us that spring has not sprung yet!*

Dump the trash unless you have chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, paints or contaminants. Take those items to a special facility for disposal. Contact your garbage collection agency for drop off locations. Box your donations and donate immediately lest you be tempted to reclaim items. Do the same with your recyclables or sale items. Organize what's left to store in a manner that is easily and safely accessible.

Walk around your garden and really look at your landscape. What needs a tune up? Are the hinges on your gate squeaking? Do you have broken fence slats? Do your hedges need a haircut? When was the last time you painted or stained your deck? Is it time for a patio power wash?

Pick up the dog bones, clean out the litter boxes, and get a storage container for all of the unused children's or pet toys. Check your irrigation system. Turn on the sprinklers to determine if you have any broken heads or pipes. What about your nightscaping? Do you have bulbs that are burned out? Are the batteries run down on your solar lights?

Your front entrance and sidewalk are the first greeting areas for yourself and guests. Give your porch a thorough cleaning and sweeping. Add a blooming plant in a pretty container. Buy a new welcome mat. Polish the hardware on your door.

After weeding your flowerbeds, add a fresh layer of mulch not only to beautify your landscape, but also to retain moisture and keep the soil temperatures constant while deterring erosion. Turn the compost pile.

As you march around your yard you'll discover a plethora of chores that are begging for your attention. Make a list, check it twice or three times, and get to the most important items first.

## Garden Happenings

The bare branches of the trees tell us that it is still winter, but the buzzing of the bees coupled with the sweet melodies of songbirds indicate that spring is right around the corner. My garden seems to have awakened from its slumber a full month early. Until the last

few days of the month, February had been bone dry and exceptionally sunny forcing numerous plants to bloom early. Daffodils, and narcissi have been blooming for two months and will continue for another two. The Italian white peach that normally forecasts a St. Patrick's Day celebration burst into full bloom on Valentine's Day. My shamrocks, also known as oxalis, are in their cheery yellow glory. Colorful freesias, tulips, Dutch iris, calla lilies, and hyacinths announce the stirrings of spring.

The precipitation was welcome news, but the cold front that accompanied the rain dropping temperatures into the 20s caused tender plants to freeze. The morning after the first frigid night, the shriveled shapes of lamium, sage, and nasturtium greeted me on my daily meditation walk. Part of tidying the garden is to understand what to prune back and what to leave until all danger of frost has past. The sage and lamium are best cut immediately, while the pruning of the nasturtium will wait until later in the month. Viburnum, with its tiny white flowers, does well in cold weather and accentuates the beauty of a four-season garden.

If you properly pruned your roses toward the end of January or beginning of February, you will see that they are now sprouting leaves. Within a month, buds will open. A few of my David Austen roses are already blooming. I am still planting bare root roses. World renowned rosarian Michael Marriott will join me on my radio broadcast from 4 to 5 p.m. on March 7. Get more information at <https://www.starstyleradio.com/starstyle-radio>. Michael will discuss the latest trends and techniques in cultivating a beautiful rose garden.

My mother used to instruct us with the words "cleanliness is next to Godliness." That truth wasn't written in ink, but it did help me toss that extra box of toothpicks. I know for certain that everything looks so much better and more attractive when it's clean and clutter-free.

Live in truth. Live in nature.



*Viburnum shines in any landscape during winter or spring.*