



# FROM THE GROUND UP FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

January 2016

*“Sowing The Seeds Of Love For Gardening”*

<http://www.florencecountymastergardeners.org>

## From the Potting Bench, NEW YEAR'S GARDEN RESOLUTIONS

I will plant one new vegetable and one new flower in my garden in 2016.

I will have my vegetable and/or flower bed soil tested and make any needed adjustments for better crop performance.

I will start a compost pile for the benefits it provides.

I will replace dead or damaged plants

I will attend some of the local gardening seminars.

I will not brag about growing the biggest tomato or watermelon, raising the finest okra or most tasty corn, etc. ....unless I get the chance.

I will share some of the things I've learned with my neighbors.

I will clean up those perennial beds before the perennials are all a foot tall; tough to do the clean-up then.

I will turn that compost pile. There's a huge difference between composting and piling up a bunch of organic junk to slowly rot!

I will stake and prune the tomato plants and keep it up all summer. In case you're wondering, tomatoes are not intended to be shrubby groundcovers.

I will do one good gardening deed all year and convince a friend to get rid of those piles of mulch around the base of their trees. The volcanoes are terrible for the trees and waste valuable mulch.

I will buy a fabulous new container and replace the beat up, cracked and abused old container isn't doing my garden any favors. Then I will toss that tired old potting mix on the compost pile and start off with a nice, new, soilless planting mix.

Finally, I **will** go out and sit in my garden this year. I will take my lemonade and comfy chair and go out and just sit and listen and enjoy.

## Benefits of Mulching

When applied correctly, mulch has the following beneficial effects on plants and soil:

- Mulches prevent loss of water from the soil by evaporation.
- Mulches reduce the growth of weeds, when the mulch material itself is weed-free and applied deeply enough to prevent weed germination or to smother existing weeds.
- Mulches keep the soil cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, thus maintaining a more even soil temperature.
- Mulches prevent soil splashing, which not only stops erosion but keeps soil-borne diseases from splashing up onto the plants.
- Organic mulches can improve the soil structure. As the mulch decays, the material becomes topsoil. Decaying mulch also adds nutrients to the soil.
- Mulches prevent crusting of the soil surface, thus improving the absorption and movement of water into the soil.
- Mulches protect the trunks of trees and shrubs from damage by lawn equipment.
- Mulches help prevent soil compaction.
- Mulches can add to the beauty of the landscape by providing a cover of uniform color and interesting texture to the surface.
- Mulched plants have more roots than plants that are not mulched because mulched plants will produce additional roots in the mulch that surrounds them.

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After a morning in the garden, this chili would be a great way to warm up.

**Crockpot Chili**

2 large onions chopped  
1 large green pepper chopped  
1 1/2 pounds ground beef  
32 ounces of tomato sauce  
1/4 cups catsup  
1/2 cup chili sauce  
1/2 cup water  
1/4 teaspoon paprika  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons chili powder  
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce  
16 ounce can of pinto beans drained

16 ounce can of kidney beans drained

Brown and drain the ground beef. Place all the ingredients in a slow cooker and stir. Cook covered on low for 6 hours.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Master Gardeners of York County  
11th Annual  
Joy of Gardening Symposium  
February 27, 2016**

This year's Joy of Gardening Symposium presents a roster of experts who can help you with those challenges. They will provide you with information and resources drawing from their expertise in horticulture and environmental research. You will be able to take this information with you and use it to revitalize your inner gardener and get started with your gardening plans for 2016.

<http://symposium.yorkmg.org/>

**Greater Greenville Master Gardener Association of South Carolina  
Annual Symposium**

Featuring entertaining and informative speakers from near and far. The symposium provides attendees an inspiring and engaging day and an introduction to new ideas in the ever-changing world of horticulture.

[Link](#)

**Moore Farms Botanical Garden**

**Growing Orchids Indoors**

Friday, February 19, 2016

9:30 am – 2:00 pm

Ed Scott of Clearvue Orchid Nursery will be teaching everything you'll need to know about orchids from different types to how to grow them well inside. In this class, you'll learn different types of orchids, their cultural requirements, how to grow them successfully indoors and how to avoid common mistakes in care.

Cost: \$25 per person

[Link](#)

**Pruning Made Easy**

Thursday, March 3, 2016

9:30 am – 2:00 pm

It's time to get pruning! Winter is the best time to alter your plants structure so come learn how to do it the right way. Erik Healy, MFBG's Horticulture Manager, will be leading this class covering what to prune, how to prune, when to prune, what tools to use. This class will be very hands on, so please bring gloves and pruners if possible.

[Link](#)

**BEHIND THE GARDEN GATE**

**Sat. May 28 & June 4**

**10:00AM**

Hidden behind ivy-covered walls and artful wrought-iron gates, some of Charleston's most charming gardens await you. Spoleto Festival USA will again collaborate with the Charleston Horticultural Society and The Garden Conservancy to open the gates to 16 of the gorgeous gardens that grace the Holy City. Each of the two weekend tours feature eight gardens on the Peninsula.

The tours are self-guided and will be offered rain or shine.

[Link](#)

## February In The Garden

### General

Clean foliage on houseplants.  
Order seeds or purchase from local farm center.  
Prune rose bushes.  
Prepare vegetable garden.  
Take soil sample to Clemson Extension Service.  
Move established plants to other locations this month.  
Freshen up edging, flower bed areas and natural areas.  
Remove dead branches, twigs, and leaves from areas to prevent disease.  
Cut early flowering shrubs to force indoors now.  
Trim mondo grass and liriope with lawn mower set on high.  
Be sure to put out birdhouses and fill feeders and birdbaths. Water during dry periods.  
Lime lawn and garden beds if soil test indicated and not already done

### LAWNS

**Fertilizing:** Even though the winter may be mild it is too early to apply fertilizer.  
**Mowing:** Using the highest setting, mow ground covers of mondo and liriope mid-month.  
**Special Care:** Spot treat broadleaf weeds. Pre-emergent herbicide should be applied now to control crabgrass and other summer annual weeds. Repair areas in lawn with sod if necessary.

### VEGETABLES & FRUITS

**Planting:** Sow outdoors: peas, snow peas, Chinese cabbage, onions, broccoli, beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, Irish potatoes, and transplant collards. Plant the "short day" onion varieties for bulb onions. Plant blueberries now, planting 3 different bushes, to ensure pollination and frequent pickings. Select local varieties (rabbit eye) for best results. Finish planting fruit trees. Start herb seeds indoors of basil, borage, chamomile, parsley, and summer savory. Sow chives, dill and coriander outdoors.  
**Fertilizing:** Fertilize and lime herbs. Rosemary, sage, thyme, and marjoram, and parsley need extra lime. Fertilize fruit trees. Pecan trees will need 4-6 lbs. of 10- 10-10 plus zinc per 1 inch trunk diameter at 4 ft. height. Fertilize established strawberries with 6-8 lbs. of 10-10-10 per 100 feet row. This is a good time to fertilize shrubs. Apply 12-6-6 or similar analysis as directed on the label or if you have a good supply of nutrient-rich compost, spread that around your trees and shrubs.  
**Pruning:** Prune peaches, plums, apples, and pears.  
**Special care:** Plant bare root woody landscape plants and trees. This is also the time to prune summer-blooming evergreen shrubs

### FLOWERS

**Planting:** Sow seeds for warm-season annuals indoors: marigolds, zinnias, coleus, salvia, etc. Plant bare root roses. Check stored bulbs, corms, tubers for signs of rot.  
**Fertilizing:** Continue feeding pansies every two weeks with liquid fertilizer and water regularly. Feed spring bulbs with 5-10-10 or bulb food when leaves appear. Fertilize roses toward the end of the month. Fertilize established perennials with 12-6-6.  
**Pruning:** Prune rose bushes: remove dead, diseased, and weak wood now, saving 3-5 good canes. At the end of the month, prune pampas grass to within 6 inches of the ground. This is the last month to prune hybrid tea roses.

### Houseplants:

Look for spider mites, scale, and mealybugs. If found, spray with dormant oil or insecticidal soap as directed on the label. Plants on window sills need attention on cold nights. Tender foliage will be killed if they come in contact with the cold window.

## Spring Gardening Tips

### Growing Annuals from Seed

Growing annuals like zinnias, marigolds and tomatoes from seed is easy and economical. The exact time to start seeds varies with the plant and with your location. In general, it's about six weeks before the date of the average last frost in your area. Seed catalogs and packages usually list the number of weeks needed when starting seeds indoors.

Use a potting mix specially formulated to start seeds; you can find such mixes at almost any garden center or hardware store. The mixes are sterile, provide the drainage that seedlings need, and are sometimes enriched with fertilizer. Fill peat pots or other seed-starting containers with the mix and thoroughly moisten it. Then sow your seeds of choice following the directions on the packet.

Place the containers on a tray in a very sunny window or under a grow light. Never allow them to dry out. As soon as the seedlings develop four leaves, use scissors to thin out your seedlings, leaving just the healthiest looking ones.

After all danger of frost has passed, place the trays of seedlings outdoors in a sheltered place for several days, gradually lengthening the time they are exposed to the sun and wind to prevent scorching the leaves, before transplanting them into the garden.

### A little TLC for Your Perennials

Herbaceous perennials and grasses, a group of diverse and reliable plants that return to the garden year after year, can greatly benefit from a little extra attention in the spring. Here are some tasks that will help your plants get off to a healthy start.

- \* Remove winter mulch from around the crowns of perennials.

- \* Cut back any parts of the plant that were left up for winter interest, such as flower stalks and seed heads.

- \* For evergreen perennials, remove any dead leaves.

- \* When new growth is about three to four inches tall, dividing and transplanting may be done. For spring-flowering plants, wait till they are finished blooming.

- \* Begin placing stakes to support the growth of tall or fragile perennials.

### Pruning early-blooming shrubs

Shrubs that bloom early in the year, such as forsythia, form their flower buds the previous year. In the rush of the spring season, there are always so many chores to do it's easy to forget that these early flowering shrubs need pruning immediately after bloom. If you wait too long before getting around to it, you'll cut off next year's flower buds. And if you don't prune at all, these strong growers will quickly turn into giant tangles.

As soon as the last flowers fade, use a pruning saw to cut off one-fourth to one-third of the biggest, oldest stems at ground level. Use pruning shears to shorten all of the stems to two or three feet from the ground. If you wish to greatly limit the shrub's size, you can cut the branches as far back as six inches from the ground. By the end of the growing season, new branches will have formed. These will arch gracefully from the center and will be covered with new flower buds for next year's spring show.

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### Signs You Might Be A Master Gardener

1. Dirt! In your house, in the trunk of your car, under your fingernails and on your shoes, even the good ones!
2. Gives zucchinis to friends and co-workers (and sometimes the postal deliverer and UPS driver).
3. Mountain of plastic pots squirrelled away.
4. Pruning clippers in your back pocket.
5. Seed collecting materials, plant holders and coffee grounds from the coffee shop in the car.
6. There are plants waiting to be added to your garden.
7. When you tour a garden you first look for their composting set up.
8. You look at vehicles based on how many tools and how much soil/compost/amendments they'll hold.
9. You stop talking mid-sentence when you see a plant you don't recognize.