

Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

I'm Baaacckkk!

Having spent 10 days in the hospital, suffering a 6-8 incision in my belly and the removal of about 18 inches of my small intestine, I'm back among the living—well, walking wounded anyway. Still can't go outside and do anything worthwhile, but I'm working on it. I'm kinda stuck here for the next several weeks because I'm not to do anything but walk around a little and try to get my strength back Scheesch! Every time I look out the window, I see something else I need to do. So, I'm just gonna list the stuff that I know I need to be doing to maybe jog your memory about doing some of them in your yard and gardens. That's gonna have to do for now, troops.

The purple martin house needs to be cleaned out and put back up. It's been down all winter, but I never got around to cleaning it out. After hosing it out, mix up a 10 percent bleach solution and spray it to sanitize it and then rinse it out real good again. Put it back up because it's time for the scouts to come looking for places to visit...and we all know what they do to the mosquito population in the summer.

Cut back the old asparagus if you haven't already. Mine already has a couple of shoots coming up among all the dead stuff on top. I sure hope home-grown asparagus tastes better to me than the store-bought stuff. In the past, it's always tasted like so much Play Dough. For whatever reason, my wife loves it and I've got 10 plants in the garden. With any luck, there oughta be a few hundred shoots and maybe, just maybe, they'll taste like something other than a wet paper plate. I've got high hopes.

The rest of the veggie bed from last winter is still out there—dead as a door nail and ugly as sin. I just haven't been able to get it cleaned up. Donno when I'll get it done, now. My daughter is coming in this week and maybe I can lean on her a little in that area. I need to at least get my tomatoes potted up and ready for planting in a few weeks. Doubt that I'll have any other veggies this spring. Donno. I'm still hoping that I can get some of the later ones put in about April. Cross your fingers.

Last Monday was the day to prune the roses—remember? Valentine's Day? If you didn't get it done, there's still time. If you have hybrid tea roses, cut the oldest canes down to just above the union bud and leave only 4-5 main branches about 30-36 inches tall. Fertilize the heck out of them with whatever you've been using and water it in really good. Mulch with 3-4 inches of good natural mulch and then stand back and prepare to be amazed. If you have old-fashioned roses, you don't have to prune quite so severely to get a beautiful spring blush. Cut back the tops to about 4 feet above the ground and trim out any dead, damaged or diseased branches to leave a shorter bush which is waiting to start its spring growth. If you have climbers, wait until after the first blooming period to prune them and then prune them back to where you want them to start from again. Fertilize, water, and mulch for good spring bloom.

Cut back to the ground any perennials that have been frozen. You can cut most of them down to about 2-3 inches above the ground. Fertilize and mulch and water just enough to get the fertilizer into the ground. The ground is pretty well saturated and if you water too much, you'll wash the fertilizer away.

Work up any new beds that need it and incorporate 3-4 inches of compost as well as the recommended amount of fertilizer. Let the beds just set and mellow out for a few weeks before you plant any spring plants.

Please don't use the weed-and-feed products yet. Your grass isn't actively growing. The green you see is mostly weeds and you don't need to fertilize them. You can, however, put out the pre-emergent herbicide for summer weeds.

Send your ideas, questions, or comments to gardener@gvtc.com