

## Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

More Good News!!

Just wondering how much good news one person can handle. For instance, I got the word from my surgeon today that I'm good to go; i.e., don't have to go back to see him any more. Still can't lift anything over 10 pounds yet, but probably will be able to in 3 weeks or so. Yeah, I lost January due to the back problems and February due to the surgery, and now I'm gonna lose a coupla weeks of March, BUT THEN I can go outside to do some gardening and into the shop to do some work that's been waiting several weeks. Yea!!!!

On top of that, my youngest daughter come to visit for a few days last week and in two days did more gardening cleanup and fertilizing for me that I can do in two weeks. There's a lot to be said for raising your kids right. Know what I mean? And, of course living a clean, reverent, Boy-Scout-life-style can't hurt either. Right? Some of us just have all the luck. TADA!!!!

So what does all this have to do with your gardening efforts? Nothing. I'm just bragging and showing off.

Hey, tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. at the Education Building in the San Antonio Botanical Garden, I'm gonna be talking about spring veggies for the Northeast ISD. I don't have a clue about the cost of the course, but it lasts for about 2-3 hours, has lots of handouts and is lotsa fun. C'mon down. The next Saturday, I'm gonna be talking about building your own inexpensive greenhouse—same time, etc.

Also, on Monday, the 28<sup>th</sup> at the Garden Center on New Braunfels at Funston in SA, Malcolm Beck is gonna be talking about "Organic Gardening" to the GVST Essentials of Gardening class. He's gonna be talking from 12:15 to 3:15 p.m. So if you're hankerin' to learn a lot more about organic gardening, this is your opportunity. All GVST asks is a \$5 donation to offset the cost of the handout materials. Malcolm will also be signing books if you'd like.

If you haven't cut back the *salvia gregii* yet, it's time to do it. Cut it back by about one-third to one-half to stimulate new growth and lots of flowers. Fertilize it with about one cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) or 2 cups of organic 9-1-1 or 7-2-2 and then mulch the bed. You can also cut back the Texas Sage if you want — about the same amount. According to Dr. Jerry Parsons, both the sage and *salvia* could be cut back every year. He even suggests cutting back the *vitex* or chaste plant every year. I've cut mine back this year and am anxiously waiting to see what happens. If you have purple fountain grass, you can also cut it down to the ground. It might come back and it might NOT come back. Some of mine come back every year but most of them don't. Purple fountain grass is considered an ANNUAL by the SA Botanical Garden, but then so is Mexican heather. Lots of folks get them to grow as perennials. I donno how, they just do.

It's time to get your tomatoes potted up—they go in the ground in the latter part of March/first part of April. Most all the good varieties are available in the nurseries now. "Potting up" means to take the small plant out of the small pot and put it into a one-gallon container. Pinch off all the lower branches on the plant and put it into the potting soil clear up to the underside of the top leaves. This way, you will help the plant develop roots all along the stem. When you get ready to plant them in a month or so, you'll have a root ball as big as your fist or bigger. This will give your tomatoes a much better chance of surviving in case we have a lot of rain again or have a hot spell or whatever. You can do the same thing with bell peppers.

Don't fertilize the lawn yet. I'll let you know when...!

Send your ideas, questions, or comments to [gardener@gvtc.com](mailto:gardener@gvtc.com)