

Spring

march ■ april ■ may

GRASS

For cool-season grasses such as bluegrass, fescue or perennial ryegrass, early March is a good time to aerate and de-thatch. Fescue should be watered once a week, but increase to twice a week as daytime temperatures reach the mid-60s. Bluegrass and perennial ryegrass will probably need more frequent watering.

Warm-season grasses such as blue grama and buffalo can be mowed to two inches high in March, which allows the soil to warm faster. Water every 10-14 days, increasing to once a week by late May.

ANNUALS, PERENNIALS, WILDFLOWERS

Clean out last year's dead blooms and stems. Compost or mulch the clippings as long as they are disease-free.

In March put out cool-season plants such as gazania, California Poppy, and Mexican Primrose. Delay planting heat-loving plants, such as desert zinnia, purple groundcherry and cherry sage until mid-May. Water new transplants every third day for a few weeks and then once a week through summer.

Sow seeds such as penstemon, Mexican hat, and zinnia germinate better when they've

been chilled moist for at least two weeks, and planted in March and April. Water just enough to keep the ground damp.

Wait to seed warm-season ornamental grasses until mid-May. Water daily until seeds sprout, then gradually reduce to once a week.

Moderate ZONE:
Infrequent watering

Drought-tolerant ZONE:
Water rarely

MORE HELP FOR YOUR GARDEN

■ The Journal's landscape series www.abjourn.com/xeri

■ XeriscapE, water conservation and city water bill rebate information at (562)768-3655, or www.coba.gov/waterconservation

■ XeriscapE information at www.xeriscapem.com

■ Look for tips on water-wise gardening every three months on the cover of *HomeStyle*. Our next quarterly planner will appear Saturday, June 7.

LIZARDS

These friends of the garden eat lots of bugs and are fun to watch. Give them hiding places like loose rock walls.

CACTI AND SUCCULENTS

For the most succ among these, such as prickly pear, delay watering until May and then water once a month. The more broadly adapted, such as sedum and yucca, can be watered every two weeks.

Mini-oasis ZONE:
Heaviest water use

TREES AND SHRUBS

Deep water once a month starting in March and increase to twice a month by May. A small dose of nitrogen fertilizer may be appropriate just as leaves start.

BIRDS

Continue feeding birds in spring, since they need extra energy for the nesting season. Providing birds with fresh water is also important.

BUG WATCH

Aphids are a problem on soft new growth. Carefully wash them off the plant with a strong spray of water. As new growth hardens, aphids become less of a problem.

WATER HARVESTING

Consider capturing rainwater in a rain barrel for use later.

VEGETABLE GARDEN

Start vegetable seeds in a cold frame in March. Water every 3-5 days as needed. Plant garden with cool-season vegetables such as spinach, beets, carrots, peas and cabbage. Wait until frost danger has passed (mid-April) before planting warm-season vegetables.

FRUIT TREES

Deep water every 10-14 days. With apple and pear trees wait for petals to fall before spraying for codling moth. Fertilize all fruit trees in March and again in May.

COMPOST

Work finished compost into garden beds and start a new pile with manure, kitchen waste (no meat or grease) and lawn clippings (do not use Bermuda grass, which can sprout).

NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS

Deep water well-established trees and shrubs once a month. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered every two weeks in March and April and once a week starting May. Delay planting of native trees until early summer. March pruning is OK for fast-growing shrubs like sheela and flameless sage.

Sources: Judith Phillips, Bernardo Beach Native Plants; Gail Krulik, Wild Birds Unlimited