



THE GARDENERS CALENDAR

STARNOTE 100
January 2010

When to do what for better gardens

JANUARY

Take care of your lawn. Make every effort to avoid walking on your lawn when frost is present, damage will show later. Mowing should not be often needed during this month. Fescue should not be cut short at any time. Fertilization with high nitrogen fertilizers like *WinterGem™* is appropriate now

Prune deciduous trees and shrubs. Best done during January. The plants are fully dormant. Thin out congested tops, remove crossing branches and broken, damaged or diseased wood. Do not pollard trees !

Prune roses. Winter temperatures are rarely cold enough for long enough to put roses into a dormant state. They need a dormant period to produce properly in spring. Now's the time to make it happen. Strip all leaves from the bushes and prune. See StarNote 520, *Rose Selection, Care and Planting* for complete instructions.

Dormant spray fruit trees and roses. Prevent spring pest and disease problems with applications of dormant-disease control and dormant oil sprays. The treatment will prevent fungal spores and destroy overwintering insect eggs. Also this will help prevent aphids, powdery mildew, peach leaf curl and other problems common to fruit trees and roses. It's important to spray early before the buds swell. **DO NOT USE SULFUR SPRAYS ON APRICOT TREES.**

Continue to plant Roses, Dormant Pot roses and Fruit Trees. This is a prime planting time for spring and summer production. Remember, roses do best in Afternoon shade.

FEBRUARY

Watch out for strong winds. Spring often comes early to the Desert Southwest. Winds can stress new plantings and burn young leaves. Water deeply and make sure all new trees are **STAKED PROPERLY**. Use multiple poles and soft ties to keep trees from breaking or blowing over.

Finish planting Dormant Pot Roses and Fruit Trees. All planting should be completed by Valentine's Day or the plants may not survive the coming summer heat.

"Wake up" Established roses. About 3 weeks after pruning, get roses ready for the spring blooming period with the "Star Potion" discussed in StarNote 605, *Fertilizer Mixture for Established Roses*.

Fertilize fruit trees and grapes early in the month. The greatest need for nitrogen is about 6 weeks before and after bloom. Proper feeding during this period helps ensure the highest quality fruit. The use of a soil alkalinity modifier like Con-Gro can substantially enhance your plants uptake of nutrients. The "Star Potion" for fruit trees is discussed in StarNote 610, *Fertilizer Mixture for Established Fruit Trees*.

Frost damaged plants. If damaged by a freeze or hard frost, leave plants unpruned and undisturbed until later in spring. Pruning or transplanting after such damage may further weaken or kill the plant. When new growth emerges, you'll see where to prune it.

Prevent spring lawn weeds through application of a pre-emergent weed control product like Portrait™. *Amaze®* gives excellent pre-emergent control in tree wells, shrub and flowerbeds.

MARCH

Reset sprinkler clocks to match requirements of the *Southern Nevada Watering Authority Drought Watering Restrictions Guide* if drought conditions are in effect. Get a copy from any Star Nursery. Inspect your irrigation system for correct water delivery to all plants.

Fertilize your trees and shrubs. Your plants are stirring and will benefit from a feeding of balanced or complete fertilizer like 15-15-15. An organic-based fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Tree, Shrub & Vine Food* will condition your soil while getting the plants ready for tough weather ahead. For Legumes; fertilize with little to no nitrogen. These will require phosphorus and potassium (these do not require nitrogen). *Dr. Q's® Desert Plant and Cactus Food*, 5-10-9 is a good choice. Flowering plants should not be given as high an amount of nitrogen as this will reduce the quantity and quality of blooms. *Dr. Q's® Flower food* is a good choice here.

Feed desert plants and cacti with *Dr. Q's® Desert Plant and Cactus Food* to greatly improve spring flowering and promote vigorous growth in the coming months.

Survey your yard. Clean up debris, tune your irrigation system and replace parts as necessary. Fertilize lawns with a complete spring fertilizer like *Dr. Q's Straight Flush (16-8-8)* or *Turf Supreme® (16-6-8)*. Consider replacements for unattractive, ugly, nonproductive or diseased plants.

Thin fruit on trees when it's the size of peas. You'll have better fruit and protect the tree from breakage due to overproduction.

Over seed existing lawns or plant new lawns. See StarNote 800, *Planting a New Lawn from Seed*, and 810, *Fertilizing and Maintaining Your Lawn* for details. If you recently used a pre-emergent weed preventer, you will need to wait before seeding. When over seeding existing lawns, make an application of *Dr. Q's® Sod & Seed Starter*, and cover seeds with a fine mulch like *Top Dressing* immediately after seeding, to get your new grass off to a quick, healthy start.

Aphids, Leaf Hoppers and Cabbage Loopers; These are major pests on vegetables, bedding plants and grapes. There are many chemical and organic insecticides that provide effective control. Bayer makes a variety of effective and reasonably safe products, or for the organic gardener, pick off by hand, wash off with the hose, use *Insecticidal Soap*, *Bacillus Thuringensis (Bio Worm Killer®)*, or *Neem Oil* or beneficial insects like *Lady Bugs* or *Praying Mantids*.

Plant tomato starts. An early start ensures a good crop since most varieties won't set fruit in the heat of summer. Plant different types for a continuous supply since harvest dates vary. Some good choices are *Early Girl*, *Patio*, *Cherry*, *Champion* and *Better Boy*. Heat tolerant varieties like *Heatwave* continue to produce well into the summer and can be planted through April with excellent results.

Prepare herb gardens in containers or the yard. See StarNote 215, *Growing Herbs in the Desert*, for a selection of popular varieties successfully grown here. To reduce and control insects, try Cedar Mulch. This will provide control without pesticides.

Plant spring and summer bulbs like *Gladiolus*, *Canna* and *Dahlia* for bright colors all summer long. Try Caladiums for beautiful color without flowers where insects might be a concern. For best results, mix *Dr. Q's® Flower Food and Paydirt™ Planting Mix* with your garden soil prior to planting. Check for proper placement, many of these need afternoon shade.

APRIL

Brighten up your yard. Plant all kinds of annual and perennial flowers for spring and summer color. Set out ground covers. *Gazania*, *Iceplants*, *Hearts and Flowers*, *Ivy*, *Verbena* and *Australian Racer* are some good choices. After planting, use a pre-emergent weed control. See our friendly sales associates for details.

Pretty but destructive. Watch for skeletonizers on grape leaves. Adults are iridescent purple moths and the attractive caterpillars are striped blue and yellow (with stinging, irritating hairs). Untreated they will strip all the green from the leaves very quickly. Several generations a season may weaken or kill your vines. Treat with *Bacillus Thuringensis (Bio Worm Killer®)* which will kill all kinds of caterpillars but won't hurt anything else.

Apply mulches on the surface of your vegetable and flower beds and around trees and shrubs. It keeps the soil cool and helps moisture retention. *Paydirt™ Planting Mix* is an excellent choice for all mulching needs. Bark mulch is a good alternative in high wind areas.

Give lawns a workout to prepare them for the hot summer months. StarNote 820, *Lawn Care and Maintenance Calendar*, lists fertilizer choices (StarNote 825 for Southern Utah). Continue overseeding as needed and aerate the lawn every 2-3 years.

Vegetable tips. Mulch tomatoes to conserve soil moisture and water deeply, but not every day, to encourage deep rooting and discourage blossom drop. Plant warm season vegetables like squash, peppers, beans and melons. Plant hot season tomatoes like *Heatwave* which will continue to produce as temperatures climb. Feed monthly with *Dr. Q's® Vegetable & Tomato Food (6-10-6)* or Black Gold Earthworm Castings.

MAY

Reset sprinkler clocks to increase watering length due to increased temperatures. The best time to water is between the hours of 3 and 6 AM. Check with any Star Nursery for a copy of the Southern Nevada Water Authority *Watering Guide* or *Drought Watering Restrictions Guide*. Inspect your irrigation system for correct water delivery to all plants.

Control wild unwanted Bermuda by fertilizing and watering it until it is lush (this will make the plant more vulnerable), then treat with a non-selective grass killer like *Round-up®*. Several treatments may be necessary for effective control. An alternative is to cultivate the Bermuda. It makes a dense, water efficient turf when properly contained and cared for. Treated areas can be replanted or re-seeded after dead turf is removed. These herbicides are also effective in treating tree wells and shrub beds without harm to desirable plants. Remember – keep herbicide off of desirable plant foliage!

Aggressively manage insect pests with insecticides or organic controls. Paint fruit tree trunks with white, water-base paint or use tree wrap to protect from sunburn and help prevent borer infestation.

Refresh potted plants by adding new potting soil or shifting overgrown house and patio plants into larger containers with fresh soil. Use a long slow outdoor watering to leach buildup of fertilizer and water soluble salts. Apply a mild fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Gold Dust (5-10-5)* or *Dr. Q's Houseplant Tonic (5-3-1)*. Use cache-pots to surround patio plants and keep them from overheating. Increase watering frequency as needed.

Prune desert plants. Now is a good time to do light pruning on low-water use plants and reduce stress from overgrown foliage and seedpods. Be careful not to expose tender trunks to full sun if they've been well shaded previously.

Be picky about fertilizer. Most ornamentals will benefit from a mild feeding of a complete, packaged fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Tree, Shrub & Vine Food (16-8-4)*. Fertilize lawns before the end of the month to get them through the first heat wave. Renew mulches as necessary.

Plant heat-loving flowers like *Texas Bluebells, Pentas, Vinca, Marigold, Moss Rose and Zinnias*. Amend soil thoroughly and use surface mulches to make them more water efficient. Continue to plant summer bulbs like *Dahlias* and *Cannas*.

JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST

Second application of Pre-emergent weed control. Depending on the amount and timing of your first application, it may have become ineffective by now. Weeds will continue to start from seed throughout the warm season (especially with the summer rains).

Do NOT fertilize your regular (non-Palm) plants with high nitrogen (over 5%) now!

Fertilize palms 2-3 times during this period with *Dr. Q's® Palm Tree Food (14-4-14)* to provide the special nutrients needed for vigorous growth and rich, green color.

More is not always better! Resist the temptation to water everything to death in the heat. Just because a plant “looks dry” does not mean it needs more water. If the soil is too often watered, the plant can not breathe, and can not take up the water in its soil.

Consult your watering guide. If watering grass more than once a day, space the waterings one hour apart. With the exception of new lawns, never water between the hours of 11 AM to 2 PM. It’s against the law – besides afternoon water evaporates before it can penetrate the soil and night water encourages fungal diseases. Deep, infrequent water and surface mulches keep your shrubs and trees healthy through this stressful time.

Prevent and control Spider Mites on evergreens like cypress, juniper and pines by using a high pressure hose to wash the foliage every 2-3 weeks. Symptoms include a dusty, off color or rust colored appearance and fine webbing on the foliage. Apply a miticide like malathion or *acephate* if infestation becomes severe.

Keep your lawn healthy without excessive growth by using a balanced, high iron fertilizer like *Dr. Q’s Triple Play (7-7-7)* or *Super Iron Plant Food (9-9-9)*. Watch for summer weeds like dandelions and spurge. Pull by hand or spot spray with a broadleaf weed killer. Don’t spray your whole lawn. Herbicide-temperature interaction could cause severe damage.

Control insect pests like roaches, ants, black widows, earwigs and sow (roly-poly) bugs with chemical or pyrethrin based insecticides. When using any pesticide, read complete instructions and follow package directions exactly!

SEPTEMBER

Reset sprinkler clocks to match requirements of the *Southern Nevada Watering Authority Drought Watering Restrictions Guide* if drought conditions are in effect. Get a copy from any Star Nursery. Inspect your irrigation system for correct water delivery to all plants.

Cool season vegetables. Turn your vegetable beds and amend with organic material like *Paydirt™ Planting Mix*. Begin to plant cool season vegetables from transplants available at any of our stores. Sow seed directly in the ground to start carrots, radishes, lettuce, peas, onions or spinach. Feed monthly with *Dr. Q’s® Tomato & Vegetable Food (6-10-6)*.

Kill unwanted Bermuda grass that has appeared this summer. Use *Round-up®* for effective control. It’s your last chance to control before the dormant period sets in. Once dormant, Bermuda is unaffected by herbicides.

Give fruit trees a final feeding with low nitrogen, high phosphorus fertilizer to stimulate fruit buds for next spring. Feed shrubs and trees with complete, organic-based fertilizers from the *Dr. Q’s®* fertilizer line to help them recover from summer stress and get ready for the winter.

Clean and feed roses to bring them from the summer blahs to the fall color show. Prune dead wood, spindly twigs and lightly shape the bush. Remove and discard all old leaves and other debris to prevent insect and disease problems. Feed with *Dr. Q’s® Rose Food (6-12-4)* and enjoy the blooms.

OCTOBER

Irrigate fruit trees less often. Water deeply, but further apart to encourage dormancy and fruit spur production.

Watch for increased insect activity as the weather cools. Aphids and caterpillars are once again very active this time of year. Control caterpillars with *Bacillus Thuringensis (Bio Worm Killer®)*. There are many chemical and pyrethrin based insecticides that provide effective control of Aphids. If pests like roaches and earwigs try to enter the house, treat garages and door stoops with *Bayer Home Pest Control* spray.

Purchase spring bulbs like Tulips, Daffodils, Hyacinths, Narcissus and Crocus. Artificially cool bulbs by placing them in paper bags in your refrigerator for 4-6 weeks. Do not freeze! Plant as soon as you remove from the fridge. Anemones and Ranunculus can be planted now. Space plantings 2-3 weeks apart for continuous flowering.

Decorate your patio and yard with fall color. Now is an ideal time to plant cool season flowers like pansies, stock and kale. They're great in pots or beds and will give continuous color straight through the winter.

Fall is for planting all kinds of trees and shrubs, especially deciduous plants. Get them in now. They'll establish good roots through the winter and perform beautifully next spring.

Remove thatch from lawns and over seed now for beautiful, weed-free grass next spring. Thatch prevents grass from utilizing water and fertilizer properly. Remove every 2 years with a power rake. Blades are available to fit your lawn mower. Top dress lawns with *Steer Manure*, *Humus-Gro* or *Top Dressing* to build your soil. Fertilize with a complete lawn fertilizer like *Dr. Q's Straight Flush (16-8-8)* to make it look great again. Over seed Bermuda lawns now with annual or perennial ryegrass.

NOVEMBER

Reset sprinkler clocks to match requirements of the *Southern Nevada Watering Authority Drought Watering Restrictions Guide* if drought conditions are in effect. Get a copy from any Star Nursery. Inspect your irrigation system for correct water delivery to all plants. Your first watering time should not be earlier than 9am due to frost.

Stop lawn weed seeds from sprouting through application of a pre-emergent herbicide like *Portrait®* to stop cool-season weeds such as wild mustard, dandelions and oxalis.

Keep lawns active by applying a cool-season fertilizer like *Dr. Q's Winter Gem (21-3-7)* or *Nitra King®* (22-3-9). Continue to plant fall and winter flowers.

Retrieve spring bulbs from the fridge and plant now. Use a tablespoon of *Dr. Q's® Gold Dust (5-10-5)* or *Bone Meal* in the bottom of each hole. For a natural look, scatter bulbs by hand and plant where they fall. For an English garden look, plant annuals like pansies or stock on top of the bulb bed. The bulbs will sprout through them and the annuals will hide faded bulb foliage after spring bloom.

Watch for frost as early as the 10th. Prepare to move houseplants indoors and have burlap or thermal blankets ready for citrus and other tender plants in case of a sudden freeze. Don't prune deciduous plants until after New Year's Day.

Consider a living Christmas Tree for the coming holiday season. Make it a permanent addition to your yard or donate it to a city park. See StarNote 125, *Living Christmas Trees* for complete details.

DECEMBER

Christmas Trees are available as living pines or cut varieties for holiday decoration. See StarNote 120, *Cut Tree Care Sheet*, for information on care. Poinsettias make a festive addition to your decorating scheme. See StarNote 130, *Poinsettia Care Sheet*, for maintenance tips.

Select and plant dormant pot (or bare root) roses. The season for successful planting begins now. Plant as early as possible for best results. Amend soil properly and follow package directions. Ask a friendly sales associate if you have questions.

Plant protection and watering: Frost is likely throughout the month. Over watering increases susceptibility to frost damage. Barring rain or an abnormally warm period, a deep soaking every 2 weeks or so is sufficient. Don't water cactus at all until February. Cover or bring tender plants indoors as necessary.

Divide spreading or tuberous perennials like chrysanthemum, daylily, primrose and ornamental grasses. Dig up the clump and divide by hand. Be sure to include equal amounts of roots and stems. All brown foliage should be cut off at ground level to encourage strong, fresh growth in spring.