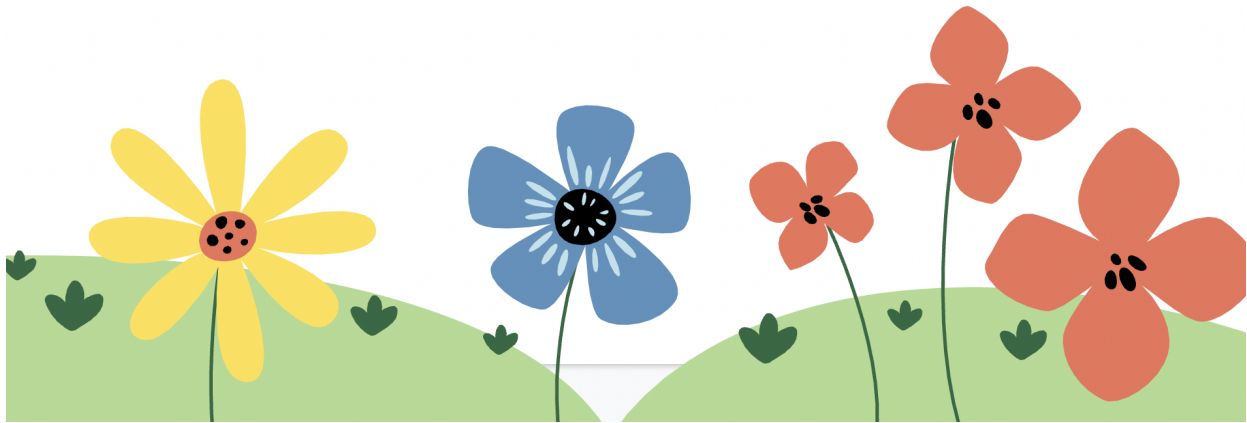




DR. R.E. MOON +
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Gardening by the Moon

March 2023 Newsletter



Spring Color: Care & Management

By Dr. Louie Gradilla

Color is a big bang for your buck! Annual flowers provide landscaped areas with colorful accents that can have more impact on the landscape than any other design element. This statement is true, but only if areas for color are prepared and maintained properly!

- Soil preparation is essential in maintaining seasonal color areas.
 - Beds should consist of up to 50% organic matter for best results and should be raised to a minimum of 4-6 inches to avoid "drowning" during wet, rainy weather. To improve your soil before planting color, consider Miracle-Gro's All Purpose Garden Soil or Kellogg's All Natural Garden Soil, or equivalent purchased at your local garden center or home improvement store.
- Fertilizers should also be incorporated into new beds.
 - Select one where the ratio of N-P-K is 1:1:1 (10-10-10 or 20-20-20) or 1:2:1 (10-20-10 or 5-10-5) and apply according to label directions.
- To reduce weeding maintenance, just before or immediately after planting, apply a pre-emergent herbicide labeled for ornamental use, such as Preen, and leave it

undisturbed on the surface.

- Don't jump the gun on planting!
 - Most spring annuals should not be planted until after the danger of killing frost has passed. Many warm-season plants, such as periwinkles and caladiums, cannot tolerate cool soil temperatures; therefore, delay planting until temperatures reach 70 degrees. It is best to plant on a cloudy or overcast day or late in the day to reduce transplanting shock. If you cannot plant the day you purchase them, keep plants in a lightly shaded spot and water them as needed.
- Just before planting, water the plants in their containers.
 - The garden bed should be moist, too. If the soil is dry, thoroughly water the plants immediately after planting. When planting time has come, mark the beds based on specified planting distance but make the design your own ... HAVE FUN! Flats of color plants are generally placed on 4-8 inch centers. Jumbo packs and 4-inch materials are frequently planted on 12-14 inch centers. The spacing selected will be determined by species, plant size, time of year, and cost. For the most success, purchase 4 or 6-inch plants.
- Lift plants carefully from cell packs or pots, keeping the root ball intact.
 - If the container is pliable, gently squeeze or push it up from the bottom; otherwise, turn it upside down to let the plant fall into your hand. Moist plants are easier to remove from a container without disturbing the root ball.
- When planting, dig a hole slightly larger than the root ball, set the plant an inch higher than the level it was growing (to account for mulch, discussed below), and carefully firm soil around the roots.
 - Water new plants well after planting and frequently until they are established, and new growth has started. Applying soluble or liquid fertilizer, high in phosphorus, should be made after planting, making sure to follow label instructions.
- Adding a 1-inch layer of organic compost is optional, but it does add a decorative "finished" look as it reduces weeds and conserves soil moisture for better growth. Avoid covering the root ball with too much soil or organic compost.
- Most annuals do not require high fertilizer levels but will do much better if adequate nutrients are available. Application of a 1:2:1 ratio fertilizer is recommended once or twice during the growing season or once every 4-6 weeks. Make sure to follow all label instructions for optimal results.
- Deep, infrequent watering is generally better than frequent, light watering since the former encourages deep root growth. Don't allow plants to remain in puddles of standing water for extended periods. This situation encourages root diseases and overwatering symptoms such as yellow leaves.
- Foliage should be kept dry if at all possible during watering. Soaker hoses work best.
 - If you must use overhead sprinklers, water disease-prone annuals (zinnias,

calendula, Grandiflora petunias, and stocks in particular) as early as possible in the day so the foliage will dry off before night, lessening the chance of disease.

- Many annuals require little additional care, chiefly begonias, impatiens, coleus, alyssum, ageratum, lobelia, vinca, salvia, etc.
 - For others, such as marigolds, geraniums, zinnias, calendula, and dahlias, you must remove faded flowers. This is known as “deadheading” and not only keeps plants attractive but also discourages disease and keeps plants from going to seed so the plants will produce more flowers and look tidier. Deadheading can be done with pruning shears or sometimes with the fingers.
- A few annuals, primarily petunias, snapdragons, and vinca, may need to be pinched back after planting or after the first flush of blooms to keep them compact and freely flowering.

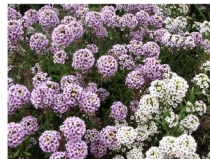
BEST SPRING FLOWERS



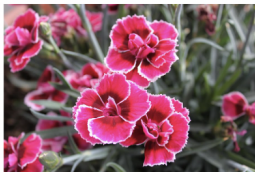
PETUNIAS



GERANIUMS



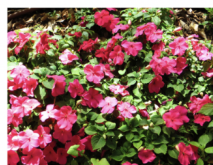
ALYSSUM



DIANTHUS



SNAPDRAGONS



CORA VINCAS



PHLOX

KID-FRIENDLY TIP

Have your children join you for planting color. It is an excellent opportunity to spend time together, allowing them to get their hands dirty. It is fun for children to see how plants grow.

Rejuvenating Plants

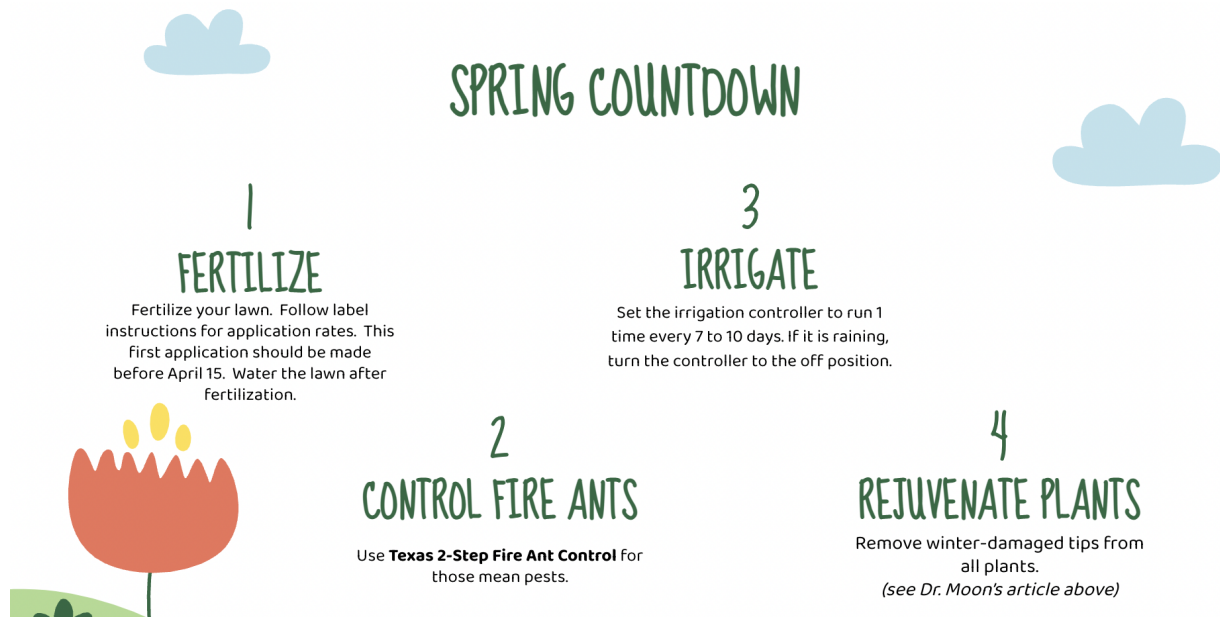
By Dr. Robert Moon

Due to this winter's freezing temperatures, plant materials have taken a hard hit. The length of cold spells, sudden temperature changes, and wind contributed to plant damage. The way forward for many plants is to do a rejuvenation pruning to remove freeze damage, dead plant tissue, and overgrown or unbalanced limbs or branches so the plant can grow new, vigorous tissue. For rejuvenation:

- First, remove all dead branches, stems, and other dead plant tissue.
- Following removal, evaluate the appearance of the plant. If the plant does not retain its natural shape, further cutback may be needed to improve its shape.

- Rejuvenation works best on multi-stemmed, twiggy, and deciduous shrubs. It is also great for perennials and ornamental grasses. Most perennials and ornamental grasses can be cut back to a height of 4 to 6 inches.

Plants that require rejuvenation can be hard pruned all at once during early spring or gradually taking off a small amount of the plant at any one time beginning in spring and ending in the summer. Pruning at the wrong time can cause serious stress for your plants. Prune in early spring before bud break, and you will be successful. Fertilize all your plants after pruning to encourage fast recovery and vigorous growth. You will find that this makeover will significantly improve your landscape appearance as plants regrow and rejuvenate.



The graphic features a central title 'SPRING COUNTDOWN' in a green, hand-drawn font. It is flanked by two light blue clouds. Below the title are four numbered steps, each with a title and a brief instruction. To the left of the first step is a stylized red flower with yellow centers and green leaves. To the right of the fourth step is a small green bush.

SPRING COUNTDOWN

- 1 FERTILIZE**
Fertilize your lawn. Follow label instructions for application rates. This first application should be made before April 15. Water the lawn after fertilization.
- 2 CONTROL FIRE ANTS**
Use **Texas 2-Step Fire Ant Control** for those mean pests.
- 3 IRRIGATE**
Set the irrigation controller to run 1 time every 7 to 10 days. If it is raining, turn the controller to the off position.
- 4 REJUVENATE PLANTS**
Remove winter-damaged tips from all plants.
(see Dr. Moon's article above)

MARCH MOON TIPS

- The best time to replace trees is in October, so the trees can establish roots before the heat of summer.
- The best time to replace shrubs is early spring so they can establish roots before the heat of the summer.



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