



31 tips and chores for gardeners to do in March

BY JESSICA DAMIANO
NEWSDAY

If this winter has taught us anything, it's that until the first of the month arrives, we can't really be certain whether March will come in like a lion.

Come to think of it, who knows whether it will go out like a lamb, either? A girl can dream, but regardless, March is a pivotal month in the garden.

During the month that ushers in spring, some areas will see crocuses emerge, pansies show their smiling faces, and we'll tackle the pruning, cleanup and planting.

Here is a tip or chore for every day.

1. Resist the urge to fertilize the lawn. Check your state's ordinances to find out when it is OK to fertilize; it's illegal to do

- so before April 1 in New York.
2. Order seed potatoes. Get them in the ground when the grass greens up.
3. Prune deciduous shrubs and trees, including fruit trees, but don't prune spring bloomers until flowers fade.
4. Test your soil's pH level, or bring a sample to the Cornell Cooperative Extension office nearest you.
5. Take inventory of your seed-starting supplies, and replenish what you need.
6. If you didn't get around to it in the fall, cut down last year's perennials and clean up beds.
7. Relocate trees and shrubs now, while they're dormant.
8. Clear out beds for such crops as asparagus, onions and bare-root roses in advance of spring planting.
9. Feed spring-flowering bulbs

- with a 5-10-5 quick-release fertilizer as soon as shoots appear.
10. Spring ahead! Set clocks ahead one hour for Daylight Saving Time.
11. Cut back last year's ornamental grasses and feed with a slow-release lawn fertilizer.
12. Start broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower indoors.
13. Learn from local experts at the Suffolk CCE's daylong Spring Gardening School in Riverhead, NY, where I'll be teaching a session on tomatoes. Call 631-727-7850 for details.
14. When pussy willows fade, prune plants hard to encourage longer branching and larger catkins next year.
15. Plant Swiss chard outdoors now for a May harvest.
16. Fertilize deciduous and evergreen trees.
17. It's St. Patrick's Day, time

- to plant peas directly into the garden.
18. Plant radish, lettuce and spinach outdoors.
19. Plant new trees and shrubs, but don't fertilize them this year.
20. Celebrate the first day of spring by planting pansies.
21. Start seeds of annuals indoors.
22. It's Earth Day! Give compost piles a dose of fish or bone meal to boost decomposition.
23. We'll never solve the mystery of spring leaves that appear after we raked in fall, but we need to do it again.
24. Repot houseplants into the next-size pot _ no more than 2 inches wider than their current containers _ and fertilize.
25. I don't care what your neighbors are doing _ or what the landscaper recommends _

- don't apply mulch until May.
26. Avoid walking on wet soil; doing so will cause compaction and risk structural damage.
27. Start caladium tubers (knobs up) and tuberous begonias (hollow side up) 2 inches deep in a 50-50 peat-perlite mix indoors.
28. Apply horticultural oil to deciduous trees to protect from mites, aphids and scale.
29. Completely remove dead stems from oak-leaf hydrangeas, thin last year's growth on peegees and cut smooth hydrangeas to the ground. (See identifying photos at newsday.com/gardening101.)
30. Divide fall-blooming perennials.
31. Got bare spots in the lawn? Seed once a week and water twice a day until new growth is as tall as the other grass.

OSCARS

FROM PAGE A6

front-runner in the best picture category doesn't feel like a sure thing.

These last few months have reminded us of the necessity of institutional change _ constant, sloppy, ill-considered institutional change. It's the national mantra, certainly in politics. And it's a show business law. "That's the way we do things around here!" the studio mogul bellows in the 1930 Kaufman & Hart comedy "Once in a Lifetime." "No time wasted on thinking!"

In August, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences floated the announcement that it's time to add a second best picture category, something like best popular movie or best popcorn movie. (This was ABC-TV muscling a decision, by all reports _ an attempt to reverse the ratings slide.)

Then came the blowback, and the sarcastic mirth was limitless throughout the land. Academy president John Bailey said never mind. Let's wait a year on that.

Then Kevin Hart came on board to host the Oscars, before objections to his arguably homophobic stand-up routines of yore gathered momentum. Upshot: No host this year. Another walk-back.

The season's reversed Oscar decisions also include the announcement of four awards, including cinematography and editing, being confined to their moment in the spotlight during commercial breaks, with edited highlights interpolated later into the broadcast.

Bailey, himself a cinematographer, announced the change, made to help keep the telecast under three hours. Then he heard from his constituents, among them many of this year's nominees. And now it's back to the way it was.

And, as many have cracked on Twitter, if "Green Book" ends up winning Sunday, no worries: The correction will

be issued by Monday.

Let's be frank: It's all guesswork and frippery and, at least in New Jersey, as of this year, a chance to bet on the outcome legally. As of Valentine's Day, "Roma" was the favorite to win best picture, with "Green Book" estimated by various bookmakers to be the second-most-likely winner.

With that heartening reminder that the 2018 movie year truly did offer something for everyone, and with apologies to the late Stephen Covey: Here are the seven habits of highly effective Oscar pundits, good through Sunday.

BE PROACTIVE

Know the results so far: The Producers Guild of America voted for "Green Book." The Directors Guild of America voted for "Roma." The Screen Actors Guild voted "Black Panther" for best ensemble.

The Writers Guild of America went for "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" in the adapted screenplay category, a terrific choice. And the WGA opted for Bo Burnham's "Eighth Grade," stupidly overlooked by the Oscars this year, for original screenplay. The Golden Globes favored "Green Book" and "Bohemian Rhapsody" in its top categories. So while "Roma" may be the favorite, it's not a sure thing.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

If important people at work want to discuss your hearty recommendation of "The Favourite," and why you misled the public into thinking it was a comedy, or a tragicomedy, or worth seeing in the first place, engage them only if you have prearranged a meeting to postpone the discussion at the 12-second mark.

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

If you're watching the Oscars at home, the correct way to make popcorn is on the stove, a little canola oil in a saucepan, one kernel as the signal. Wait for the pop, then add the rest so that it covers the bottom of the pan evenly. Melt the butter in a separate pan, pour over popped corn, add salt. This is far more important than anything on the show itself.

THINK WIN-WIN

Every best picture nominee has its champions. So whichever film wins Sunday, it's good news for somebody. Unless it's "Green Book" or "Bohemian Rhapsody."

SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" urges empathetic listening to genuinely understand a person. You can

practice this next time you're talking to someone who hated "The Favourite."

SYNERGIZE!

If "Black Panther" wins Sunday, it'll be fantastic for ABC, owned by Disney, which owns Marvel, which made "Black Panther."

SHARPEN THE SAW

Your personal saw can be used to make mental edits to Sunday's Oscars, should they run into Monday.

The 91st Academy Awards air 8 p.m. Eastern Sunday on ABC. For more viewing and background information, go to oscar.go.com.



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