

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



See more photos inside.

March 5, 2010

Things to do in March: Get ready! Though everything is snow-capped, Spring cometh!

1. Spring-cleaning: Pick up all winter debris. Repair, replace, repaint. That's the general mantra for decks, outdoor furniture, patios, tools, pots and plants.
2. Cut back plants and tidy up wherever needed.
3. Lawn care: Rake through, fertilize with compost, reseed. Use caution if ground is soggy from snowmelt as walking on such ground can harm emerging grass.
4. If the compost pile has been neglected all winter, restart it by giving it a good stir.
5. Keep an eye out for emerging bulbs. Pause long enough to enjoy them. This is a good time to lift clumps of snowdrops for dividing.
6. Start hardy annuals and cool weather vegetables.
7. Get outdoor furniture set up for use. On those surprisingly warm early spring days soon to come, you'll be glad you did.
8. Remove burlap coverings and other protective materials. Choose a calm, mild day to do this, as you don't want to shock the plants.
9. Prune roses, clematis, dogwoods, fruit trees and such. Cut back canes of soft fruits like raspberries and currants.
10. Bring in bud-laden cuttings of pussy willows, quince, forsythias, apple, cherry, magnolias or whatever flowers in your garden in spring. Place in tepid water and keep till buds are ready to open. At that time, arrange properly in vases and enjoy the show.

11. As soil softens, prepare the vegetable bed for sowing and planting. This means clean it up and top with a good layer of manure and then compost.
12. Once all snow has melted, the weeds come up without wasting any time. So start patrolling!
13. Start your organic program to ward off pests as early as advised by the manufacturers.
14. Continue caring for the plants being over-wintered indoors.
15. Start a garden journal and take lots of photographs. A visual record not only provides useful reference, but the weeds don't show! When I walk around my garden, I cannot help noticing the weeds and other flaws. But in the pictures, I think the garden looks great and then I feel a whole lot better.
16. Order seeds and plants now before it's too late.
17. Stock up on mulch, compost, soil, organic fertilizer. Keep frequently used tools handy. Being prepared means you can sneak in gardening time even on those very busy days. No time is lost hunting for gloves and trowels.