

## Garden Line - March 2011

by Brent Moon - HPARD Urban Garden Manager

Spring is a time of renewal in our lawns and gardens. The air has a sweet smell to it, and all manner of life stirs with warmer temperatures. Hopefully, you had a nice winter's rest and are ready to get going in your yard, because the weeds and pests are ready, whether you are or not!

If you like to apply pre-emergent weed control products, now is the time to do it before it gets too warm. Pre-emergent products work by laying down a chemical barrier that kills seeds as they germinate. If you have any planting or tilling to do, do it before you apply your pre-emergent or else you'll break the chemical barrier and will have wasted a lot of money.



Mid-March is typically when we begin the dreaded task of mowing the lawn. Typically, the first mowing will contain a lot of leaves mixed in with the grass clippings. You can either mow and leave the clippings on the ground as a natural source of fertilizer, which I do, or bag them and put them in your compost pile to add to your garden beds after they break down a bit. I have a mulching-type mower and I let my clippings remain on the lawn. To me, it's too much trouble to bag the clippings and I'm depriving my lawn of FREE fertilizer. Why would I want to do that?

We can still experience a late frost, so don't put the frost cloth away yet. If you plan to plant some warm season vegetables this month, such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, or eggplants, having some frost cloth handy may save your plants. I've had to cover and protect my plants on more than one occasion in March. If you plan ahead, you can save large water bottles or milk jugs and fill them with water to place around your tender plants on a cold night. If placed out the day before, the water will absorb the heat from the sun and slowly release it around your plants, effectively raising the air temperature a degree or two. This can be the difference between life and death.



Add 3-4 inches of compost to all garden beds, both veggie and ornamental, to improve your soil. You'll be amazed at how quickly this will improve the overall health of your plants and how quickly they will respond to an addition of compost. For more information on composting, view my composting presentation. It's easier than you may think and you'll be very happy with the results!

