

# Now is the time to work toward your landscape goal

By CRIS RODRIQUEZ

This is the time of year to work towards a great spring. January is a good time to work toward any landscape goal you have for March. For example, if you want a beautiful vegetable garden do not wait until March. Start now. I will go further in depth in this subject later in the article. If your flowers aren't doing so well, then beautiful winter baskets are easy to maintain and will give you a wonderful show for the next two months until spring rolls around.

Everyone has questions about pruning. Local Landscape Architect and SMU instructor, Michael Parkey said "Right now is a great time to prune because almost everything is still fully dormant". Pruning is great for your trees and shrubs. It promotes good, structural growth, which in return gives you a healthy plant. Be careful not to prune anything that is an early spring bloomer (dogwoods, plums, fruit trees, azaleas, saucer magnolias, etc.) because you will be cutting off flowers. Everyone has different opinions on how to prune crape myrtles. In my opinion, if you want your crape myrtle to grow then do not prune unless there is something structurally wrong with it. If you want to maintain the

blooms then cut off all of the seeds pods by simply cutting about 12 inches off of the canopy. Overall the crape myrtle is a very resilient, ornamental tree and in most cases will do just fine in our North Texas climate.

Trimming your trees is very important.

I always emphasize being proactive with your tree trimming.

If there is another ice storm then the weight of the ice can break a large limb and cause damage to your property.

It is essential to observe your property and look for potential accidents such as these and take action right away. In the end you will save yourself a big headache. Also, now is a good time to cut down your mistletoe. It might look healthy and green but it is a parasitic plant that is robbing nutrients from your tree and if let alone, will kill it. Now is the time to look at your irrigation system. You can do your part to conserve our precious commodity, water. On average Dallas receives an average of 34" per year. However 2008 has ended with only a total of 27.10" of rain. The



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American Water Works Association (AWWA) estimates that homes with sprinkler systems use 35% more water than those without. It is wise to install a rain and freeze sensor (if you do not have one already) because it will prevent your sprinkler system from turning on when it is raining or freezing. It is also against the law if you do not have one. The number one killer of our landscapes is overwatering. Local resident and Master Gardener, Carol Marsh,

says, "The best thing to do is to revise your whole sprinkler system to make sure everything is in working order with a licensed irrigator". A Licensed Irrigator will have the letters "LI" in front of their number and will also have a pocket card showing the license number. For example my license number is LI16047.

Right now is a great time to transplant trees, shrubs, and perennials. If you want to move a shrub or if a tree is too close to another and would benefit from giving it more space, do it now. However do not move the early spring bloomers or any kind of

bulb because they are starting to grow and in some cases are blooming. For example, you do not want to move bearded iris unless they are just barely growing. If they have grown more than an inch, then do not move them. The good time to move would be in August. Just remember, if you are going to move anything, be sure to watch for ice storms and be prepared to shelter your newly transplanted plant with mulch or a cover.

If you have any weeds in your yard right now then you should cut them immediately. If you let them grow then they will germinate seeds, which multiply very quickly. It is important that you mow your lawn if you see anything getting tall right now. As always, mowing on a regular schedule will help prevent and choke weeds out.

If you are thinking of planting or gardening in the spring then do not wait. Get a jumpstart and do it now. It is wise to think of what you are going to plant ahead of time and adjust the soil to plants beneficial requirements. Most of the time people bring home a plant and believe that all you have to do is plant it but if you do not have the correct drainage or soil for your plant than it will not flourish.

For example, if you are going to plant azaleas then you should add acidity to your bed and replace the soil with azalea soil. If you are planning a vegetable garden then start adding compost and tilling up your soil and in some cases start planting. Local Resident, Renne Hansford, says, "If you are looking for a great flower display to get you by until spring then I suggest putting some beautiful cool weather baskets". They can be hanging baskets or pots. They are easy to maintain this

time of year because they keep their moisture very well and you can fill them up with a variety of beautiful colors, sizes, and shapes. You can see examples on my website at [rcdoutdoors.com](http://rcdoutdoors.com). Currently there is a 20% off baskets, pots and tree trimming on the front page of my website.

If you have any questions or need help with tree trimming, sprinkler systems, pruning, beautiful pots, or any other landscape need please contact me at 972-489-7862 or [cris@rcdoutdoors.com](mailto:cris@rcdoutdoors.com).