

The warm weather these past few weeks has gotten everyone ready to head outside and get their hands dirty. Just because it feels like spring, doesn't mean we have to finish all of our spring to-dos now. Hold off on some tasks, we live in Nebraska after all.

It may be tempting to completely remove all of the leaves and mulch from around tender perennials, but don't give in. Strawberries, roses, chrysanthemums, and other tender plants can be protected from the fluctuating winter temperatures with winter mulch. If the mulch is removed too soon, new growth can form on the plant too early. This new growth is susceptible to damage caused by cold temperatures. Try and delay the removal of winter mulches as long as possible, but be sure it is removed before new growth begins. If the warm temperatures have caused new plant growth, rake the mulch to the side, but don't remove it completely. If freezing temperatures are forecasted, the mulch can easily be put back on the plants for protection. Continue to do this until the threat of frost has past, which is usually around Mother's Day.

Another task you might feel like completing is pruning roses. Again, don't give in to the temptation. Hold off on pruning those roses a little while longer. Before you do take the pruning tools to the roses, it is important to know what type of rose you have as this can affect how you prune. Hardy shrub roses can be pruned in March, but it is best to wait as long as possible. Ideally hardy shrub roses should be pruned after the new growth emerges. Pruning too early poses a serious risk to winter injury when there is a cold snap or snow event after pruning. Hold off pruning hybrid tea roses until late April if at all possible. They aren't as hardy as the shrub roses and they can have more significant die back after a cold snap if pruned too early in the season.

Crabgrass control and preemergence applications should also be held off just a little longer. Preemergence herbicides keep annual weed seeds, like crabgrass and foxtails, from germinating. If you are only doing a single application of these products, the earliest you want to apply is going to be the end of April or beginning of May. If you are planning on applying sequential applications of preemergence herbicides, you are still going to want to wait until the middle or end of April or beginning of May, with the second application in early to mid-June. Keep in mind; these recommendations are for homeowners applying their own preemergence herbicides. Professional applicators generally apply different products with a longer residual, so application times can vary depending on the product.

Thin lawns can also benefit from some well timed care. Unless you are planning on planting a dormant seeding of turf, it is best to wait. Thin stands of grass can be overseeded to improve the density of the lawn. Kentucky bluegrass can be overseeded throughout the month of April at a rate of .75 to 1 pound of seed per 1,000 square feet. Tall fescue lawns that have been thinned can be overseeded at a rate of 4 to 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. If you decide to overseed this spring, a preemergence herbicide for crabgrass control should not be applied because it can also keep the grass seed from germinating.

As one song stated, waiting really is the hardest part. Practice a little patience, you still have plenty of time to check off your spring to-dos and have good results for this growing season.

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