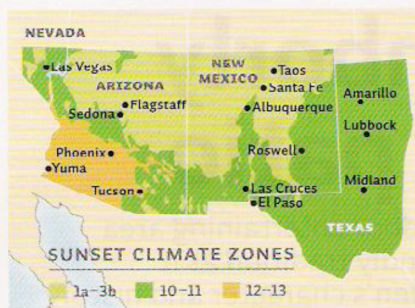


# What to do in your garden

## March



### Planning

**Citrus tasting** Sampling fresh citrus is one of the best ways to see how different varieties taste and decide which ones to grow. A good place to do this is at Tucson's Mesquite Valley Growers Nursery annual citrus tasting. Customers can compare varieties such as 'Oroblanco' grapefruit-pummelo hybrid with 'Redblush' grapefruit, or 'Dancy' and 'Honey' mandarins, all picked fresh from the nursery's vast citrus greenhouses. 9-2 Feb 24-25 and Mar 3-4; free, 8005 E. Speedway Blvd.; 520/721-8600.

**Xeriscape conference** Hone your desert gardening skills at Albuquerque's 12th annual Water Conservation & Xeriscape Conference. Among the highlights, author and garden designer Judith Phillips will speak on "precipitation-only landscaping," and garden designer and *Sunset* contributor Marcia Tatroe will address "perennials in the oasis." 8:30-5 Mar 8-9; \$150 (plus \$20 processing fee after Feb 24); Albuquerque Convention Center, 401 Second St. N.W.; www.xeriscapenm.com or 505/468-1021.

### Planting

**Bare-root fruit trees** *Sunset* climate zones 2b-3a: Plant bare-root apples, apricots, nectarines, peaches, and pears.

**Penstemon** Zones 2b, 3a, 10-13: These perennials are great choices for water-thrifty, hummingbird-attracting plants. Try *P. ambiguus*, *P. barbatus*, *P. eatonii*, *P. pinifolius*, and *P. strictus*. All are available from Plants of the Southwest ([www.plantsofthesouthwest.com](http://www.plantsofthesouthwest.com)).

[southwest.com](http://southwest.com) or 800/788-7333).

**Superstar plants** Texas A&M University horticulturists have designated more than three dozen common landscaping plants as Texas Superstars, so named because they thrive in the hot, often arid conditions of the Lone Star State. Many of these selections perform equally well in zones 11-13. Some Superstar plants to look for include Chinquapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), Satsuma mandarin, and 'Gold Star' yellow bells (*Tecoma stans* 'Gold Star'). Visit [www.texassuperstar.com](http://www.texassuperstar.com) to see the full list.

**Vegetables** Zone 10: Outside, sow seeds of broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, radishes, and spinach. Indoors, start seeds of eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes for transplanting out in six weeks. Zones 11-13: Sow seeds of cucumbers, jicama, melons, okra, summer and winter squash, and sweet corn. Near month's end, set out transplants of artichokes, peppers, and tomatoes.

### Maintenance

**Divide agaves** Zones 10-13: For agaves that reproduce by "pups" (new plants that develop next to the mother plant), dig up the pups and set them in a shaded spot for several days so the roots can callus (harden off), then replant in pots or directly in the ground.

**Fertilize** This month, give established plants a dose of an organic, balanced fertilizer (such as one with a 5-5-5 nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium ratio). Feed fruit and ornamental trees, shrubs, lawns, groundcovers, perennials, and annuals.

**Prune frost-tender shrubs** Zones 11-13: At the end of the month or after the last chance of frost is past, prune off frost-damaged foliage and branches from bougainvillea, dalea, lantana, oleander, and other tender shrubs.

**Water** As the weather warms, adjust your irrigation schedule so plants get water more often. —SCOTT CALHOUN

### Tip from the test garden

**DIVIDE PLANTS** Clumping perennials in containers—such as agapanthus—can become crowded.



**STEP 1** Gently ease the plant out of its container.



**STEP 2** Using a sharp tool, slice the plant into roughly equal sections, each with roots attached. Keep healthy sections only; discard the rest.



**STEP 3** Replant each section with fresh potting soil in its own container.