

Two years ago, on April 1, we had nearly two feet of snow. This year the temperatures soared, but what did you do? Did you get out into your yard and start the clean up? Old man winter has a way of wrecking even the most pristine of gardens and spring is a good time to clean up.



**The Island Garden**

By Roger Marshall

**Lawns**

First, you'll need to rake off the thatch and leaves left over from winter, and then cut in the edges of the lawn. Use a spade and cut a tiny bit of lawn along the edge where the flower garden starts. I like to dig down about five to seven inches, to allow space for the mulch on the flower garden. This gives a nice sharp divide between lawn and garden, although you will have to be careful when you mow the lawn. If you go over the dividing line, the mower blade scalps the lawn.

If you have any bare patches in your lawn, first rake off dead grass and rough up the surface of the mud patch. Sprinkle it with clean lawn fertilizer (make sure it's not a pre-emergence fertilizer), and rake the seeds in. Wet the area down lightly with a hose end sprayer and leave it for a few days. In about a week you should see new grass seeds starting to appear. Don't mow them until they are about three- inches high.

If whole patches of your lawn start lifting away, you have grubs. They eat the roots of grass plants and in spring the tops are dead. You'll have to scrape off the dead area and start a new lawn. But before you start your lawn, sprinkle the area with a Grub Patch Nematode kit available from Gardens Alive (www.gardensalive.com). This kit uses beneficial nematodes to attack the grubs. Once the nematode has burrowed into the insect, it lays its eggs and when the grub dies, the eggs hatch giving you tons more nematodes. With care this organic control can last for years.

**Flower gardens**

Rake off the dead leaves and stalks from last year and lay new mulch if needed. I get my mulch from Dave Ruggieri at Hopedale Trucking 294-4032. He's the guy with those huge piles of mulch that you can see while you are waiting at the traffic light on Route 1. When raking off last year's de-

bris, feed it through your shredder and into your compost pile. That way it's recycled and will provide nutrients for your plants later in the year.

**Shrubs**

Before they leaf out, prune any shrubs that you want to reduce in size. You can prune box, privet and similar shrubs, but do not prune rhododendrons yet. Wait until after they flower, then prune. This gives the plant time during summer to grow new flower buds.

When the ground has warmed up a little, mulch around your shrubs to keep weeds at bay and put a little compost in a circle of about one-foot radius around your shrub bushes to give them some nutrients.

**Vegetable gardens**

Rake off any mulch on your vegetable garden to help the ground warm up faster. You can plant potatoes and peas right now. Wait before you set out any other plants. If you left parsley and spinach in the ground from last year, they'll set leaves then go to seed, so harvest the plants quickly. Harvest sorrel, which is a perennial and can be cut all summer long.

Make sure that you dress the asparagus bed with some well-rotted horse manure or all-around fertilizer and then mulch over the manure. This will give your asparagus plants lots of nutrients all

summer. If your plants have been in the ground for more than two years, you can harvest a lot of spears this spring.

**Fruit trees**

As I mentioned last week, its time to prune them back and spray with dormant oil. If you haven't already done it, better get to it.

**In the greenhouse**

I am about to plant out spinach, Chinese greens, this year's new artichoke plants, lettuce, chard, broccoli, fava beans and snow peas. I find that I can get a complete crop from all the above plants from the greenhouse, a second crop from the outside bed and if I'm really lucky a third crop of cool weather greens from the outside bed before it gets too hot. This gives two months of snow peas and other vegetables, instead of just a few weeks.

The warm greenhouse is full of the smells of spring. The orange tree is in full bloom, the artichokes are nearly three feet high and showing the first signs of buds, the key lime tree still has a few limes and is showing flowers for next year's crop and the fig trees have all leafed out. It is now extremely hard to walk through the warm greenhouse with all the plants that are growing in there, but on a sunny day, the 85-degree temperatures are really nice.

**Pet Refuge holds flea market**

The Pet Refuge will hold a flea market Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during Wickford Daffodil Days.

The flea market will take place at the St. Paul's parish hall on Main Street in Wickford and will feature many items, including pet products.

For donations or information, call the Pet Refuge at 294-1115.

**Help cleanup historic cemeteries in RI**

A state-wide cleanup of historical cemeteries is scheduled for Saturday, April 19.

The event is sponsored by the RI Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries, chaired by Evelyn Wheeler of Narragansett, who asks that anyone wishing to clean up a historical cemetery in their neighborhood, contact her with the cemetery number or description of where it is. She can be reached at 789-3503 or by e mail at eviewhee@verizon.net.

Historical Cemetery clean up will not be limited to the Earth Day weekend, it can be done anytime. For those who can't make the April 19 date, they can call to sign up for another date. The rain date for the event is April 26.



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**Host an urban child this summer**

Residents in and around the East Bay, Rhode Island area can help light up the face of a Fresh Air child this summer by hosting through the Fresh Air Fund.

Since 1877, New York City children growing up in low-income neighborhoods have been able to experience simple summer pleasures in rural and suburban communities. By welcoming visitors into their homes during the summer, host families give Fresh Air children an opportunity to escape the sometimes dangerous, hot and crowded city streets. Fresh Air host families can choose the gender and approximate age of their visitor, but first-time Fresh Air children are between the ages of 6 and 12. Many families find their hosting experiences so rewarding that more than 65 percent of all children are invited to stay with host families, year after year.

For more information on hosting a Fresh Air child, contact Lynn Finocchiaro at 294-6556 or the Fresh Air Fund at (800) 367-0003. For more information, visit the Web site at www.freshair.org.

**Retired military to meet April 12**

The next regular meeting of The Retired Enlisted Association, Chapter 79, will be held at on Saturday, April 12, at 10 a.m. at the VFW Post 4487.

A meeting will be held on April 5, at the same location, to discuss the agenda for the upcoming 12 April meeting. The VFW hall is located at 52 Underwood Lane in Middletown.

