

From The Window

MAR. 1994 by Joan Sargent

March the Revival Month. This is the first month of the year that the avid gardener can realistically find signs of spring. At ground level the first bulbs, Eranthis (winter aconite), Galanthus (snowdrops) and the species Crocus Tommasinianus, Silver Lilac, which seeds and spreads well and is less often eaten than other Crocus. The arrow-shaped leaves of Arum italicum pictum have creamy veins and the taller Helleborus fetidus, with its fan-shaped leaves of deep green and its cluster of flowers, are good companions to these early bulbs. Above them the shrubs are awakening too: Hamamelis Pallida (witch hazel) is early, Arnold's Promise, a brighter yellow, and Diane, a good red. Cornus mas and Corylopsis are other early bloomers for the patient gardener to try.

Should this Spring Be...

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Should this Spring be your "Season of Ruthlessness"? The answer is "Yes" if: it's time you finally decide you can't see out of your window because the rhododendron put there by the previous owner of your house, is too tall; it's time you admit to yourself that you hate dwarf evergreens, even if you planted them yourself; it's time the old pine, isn't stately but an eyesore with its broken branches, the legacy of too many ice storms! If it's too early to do much outside, it's the perfect time to think about getting rid of overgrown or out-of-place shrubs and trees. No one says you have to live forever with mistakes...yours or someone else's. If you're going to pull up, dig out, move or throw out, think first what, if anything goes in when the misfit comes out. If you know exactly what you want before you shop you will save yourself a lot of future pain. Prepare the soil by incorporating as much organic material as possible to improve water retention and mulch with a feeding mulch, at least an inch of compost, well-rotted manure or leaf mulch. February chores could include fertilizing hollies and Hellebores and putting fresh dry wood ashes around lilacs. Go ahead and be ruthless! It's good for the soul and it could improve your garden.

Joan Sargent, a longtime member and master gardener who passed away in August 2012; wrote many gardening columns through the years for our newsletter. We are reprinting them again- this time with photos researched on the internet.



Galanthus nivalis. Self spreads.



Eranthis, winter aconite at Lee Garden.



Crocus tommasinianus, lilac to purple, larger flowers.



Hamamelis pallida, witch hazel.



Left, Cornus mas, aka Cornelian cherry, bears red berries later. Right, the Corylopsis flower up close. Both are early flowering shrubs.



Corylopsis sinensis, a Chinese winterhazel.