



## Gardening Uncovered: How to Prep and Prepare your Landscape for Spring

By Jason Aguilar

Spring in Florida is so energizing, the air still has a bit of the crispness from winter, the sun still feels good on your skin and the buds and blooms are starting to emerge on trees and shrubs. Not to mention the birds are singing, snakes are slithering, and everything is looking for a mate. Spring is definitely in the air. Anytime you are working outside, always make a little noise. That will scare off any of the creepy crawly creatures who may be sunbathing in your gardens.

Let's start with the trees and shrubs. Azaleas are a classic southern plant that provides year round structure and beautiful blooms in the late winter/early spring. Prune azaleas right after they finish blooming in late spring or early summer, this will allow you to shape them. You can prune them during the growing season to promote growth by removing the shaded-out branches or deadwood. Older azaleas may form tall leggy branches. These should be removed gradually over several years to reduce shock.

Camellias are another beautiful shrub that has been part of Florida landscapes for hundreds of years. These shrubs make great foundation plantings, screens, accent plants, background groupings and hedges. To get the best benefit of these shrubs, it is best to plant them in groups. With so many varieties available, that you really need to stop by Anson Nursery to see all of the beautiful colors. We recommend choosing a variety of color who are early, mid, and late bloomers that are sure to keep your garden full of color all season. Make sure you take time to consider where you want to plant these long lasting shrubs as they like a little shade. Pruning needs to be completed before late summer to avoid damaging the buds for next year.

If you have other flowing shrubs or bushes, prune after the last flowers are done, but before new buds start. This will help you create well-shaped trees and shrubs without harming next years' blooms.

Fertilizing shrubs in the spring is important to foster growth and keep them healthy all year long. A nitrogen fertilizer is a good choice because it has the strongest effect on plants about one month after application which allows the nutrients in the fertilizer to feed the new shoots as they form. This will keep your shrubs fed and growing through the hot summer months. Azaleas, camellias, and palms are ready for fertilizer followed by re-mulching to lock the fertilizer in place and keep as much moisture in the ground as possible. Plant any new shrubs in the early spring so they have time to acclimate to their new home.

Next, we have got to tackle those flower beds. Remove any dying or dead winter annuals and replace them with annuals that will bloom, in warmer months. Plant Florida friendly bulbs or



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# Gardening from page 25

bedding plants. Don't forget to consider where your flower bed is in the yard: Is it east facing, does it get full sun, is it in the shade, this will ensure that your plants stay healthy and blooming.

Pollinators are great additions to any landscape. Spring is the perfect time of year to add one. Pollinators will help attract bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies. Using Florida native species here is a great way to make your pollinators easy to care for and to ensure all of the native wildlife will make your yard a gathering place.

Gardenias are easy to maintain, with a long blooming cycle. These beauties make a great addition to any garden with their dark green leaves and fragrant white flowers. Fertilize in early spring and fall, prune after blooming for shape more than anything. If you see new growth yellowing and dropping it may be a sign of a pH imbalance that could be harmful to the plant. Older growth may also yellow and drop off, but that is normal.

Watch for signs that your garden needs water, mulch generously to help hold moisture in the soil.

Pest control is as important part of Florida gardening too. Aphids, thrips, mites scale like ornamental plants and new plant growth. These pests can make gardenias and roses lose blossoms and leaves. They can make your lawn develop brown spots. Using organic pest control, you will be less likely to harm the wildlife, or groundwater. If your garden is experiencing these pests, Anson Nursery can recommend local pest control sources.

*Anson Nursery is Citrus Counties' premiere garden center ready to help you get your garden ready for the year ahead. There, you can see a wide variety of shrubs, trees, and pollinators, that are spring garden must-have's.*

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