



UConn Plant Science & Landscape Architecture
Knowledge to Grow On!

March is For...



Shamrocks



Pruning



Building Raised Beds

UConn HOME & GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER

LADYBUG@UConn.EDU

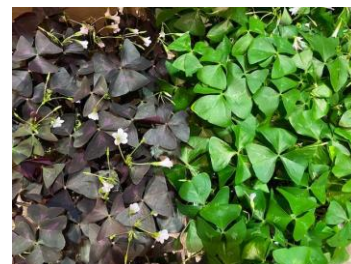
"Gardening is the only unquestionably useful job."

- George Bernard Shaw, Irish Dramatist

Shamrocks, Clovers & Oxalis, Oh My!

For every 10,000 three-leaf clover, you'll find one or two four-leaf clover. These odds explain the "luck" behind the tradition of finding one! While the popular St. Patrick's Day symbol is seen everywhere in the month of March, have you ever stopped to think about the botany behind the symbol?

The beloved shamrock, four-leaf clover and the Oxalis houseplant all have their own identities, but when St. Patrick's Day hits, they all become interchangeable. So what's the real difference?



[The Botany Behind the Shamrock](#)

Prune your Fruit Trees

Late Winter/Early spring is a great time to be pruning your fruit trees! By keeping your fruit trees properly maintained, you can encourage air flow, healthy branch growth, and productive yields each season. There are a lot of factors that go into pruning your trees "the right way," and different gardeners may have different needs to be met. One of the most important things you can do is remove any dead, dying, or weakened branches. To read about all the considerations that play into pruning decisions, check out the link below.

[UMaine: Pruning Fruit Trees](#)

Building Raised Beds Safely

Raised beds can be the pride and joy of many home gardeners. They come with many advantages:

- Using raised beds can combat poor soil conditions
- Less bending or kneeling for gardeners
- Extend the growing season by combining methods like cold frames or plastic covers over the raised beds
- They can be either a temporary or permanent fixture in your garden

When it comes to building raised beds, there are many options out there. Prefabricated beds are on the market as a quick "pop up" option. Meanwhile, others like to construct their beds themselves using various materials like cinder blocks, pallets, or fence panels. Whenever you're building your raised beds, be sure to consider the safety of the material you're using. Avoid pressure treated wood materials and take caution when using concrete products. Look for pallets with the "HT" symbol on them, indicating they have been heat treated instead of chemically treated.

If you already have beds made with these materials, don't panic! There are options to help you "seal" your beds to keep your plants safe from chemicals that may leach into the soil. For example, latex paint will help minimize the contact of the material with the soil. Some wood stains and even plastic sheeting can also be used.

[The Safety of Materials Used to Build Raised Beds](#)

Native Plants that Support Native Bees in Early Spring



Cellophane bees (*Colletes inaequalis*) are one the first of our native bees to be out and about on a warm day in very early spring, sometimes when there is still some snow on the ground. Their flight normally coincides with native willow blooms, which are one of only a few native plants that may be blooming in March. These ground- nesting solitary bees are active for a few weeks, and other native plants like bloodroot, red maple and Amelanchier are visited by these bees. They also can be seen on crocus and other early blooming spring bulbs.

Where to find these and other native plants is a common question that we have here at the Home & Garden Education Center. As gardeners become more aware of native plant solutions, we are seeing more widespread availability.

The [Connecticut Native Tree and Shrub Availability List](#) is a fantastic resource to help you find both plant recommendations and nurseries that may carry these plants!

[Learn More about *Colletes inaequalis*](#)

Wildlife Highlight: Eastern Phoebe



Eastern phoebes are native tyrant flycatchers in the Tyrannidae family. Characterized by its large head and a habit of wagging their tail when perched. Phoebes are among the first of our migrating birds to return in early spring. People often mistake the similar chickadee call for the raspier “phoebe” call. They build their nest on sheltered ledges, often on buildings. While primarily insect eaters, phoebes occasionally eat ticks, spiders, fruits, and seeds.

[Learn More about the Eastern Phoebe](#)

UConn's Brewing Innovation Initiative Talks Hops

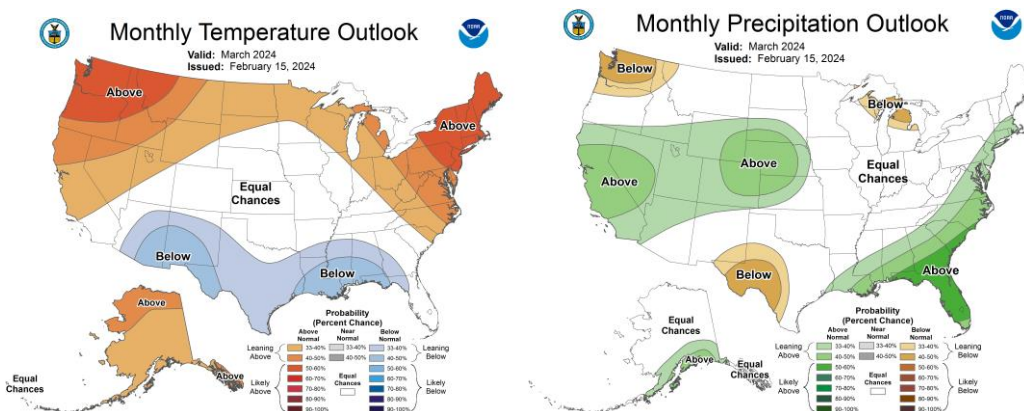


Hops farming in the northeast goes all the way back to the 16th century. Now, the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources at UConn is working with experts in the craft brewing industry and growers to help bring the brewing industry to the next level here in Connecticut!

Read more about Hops and what UConn is doing to get involved at the link below!

[Come on, Get Hoppy!](#)

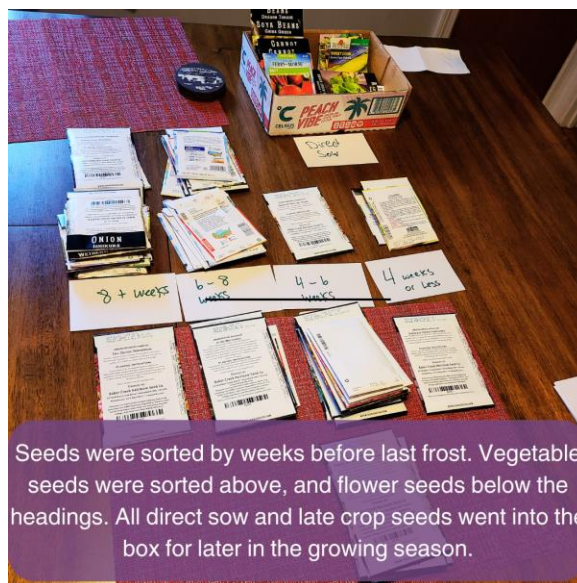
March 2024 Weather Outlook



A seasoned gardener always keeps their eye to the sky at any time of year! NOAA's National Weather Service released their discussion about how weather patterns in March will continue to lead us into spring!

[Outlook for March 2024](#)

Knowledge to Grow On



Read our Ladybug blogs written weekly:

[Simply Seeding](#)

[Cold Tolerance in Houseplants: An Unintentional Experiment](#)

[Hearts for Valentines Day](#)

[Diagnosing Nutrient Deficiencies Using Plant Symptoms](#)

Upcoming Events and Things to Do



- March 16th & 17th is Maple Weekend here in Connecticut! Many local sugarhouses will be open or hosting events this weekend. Find your local sugar house on the [Maple Syrup Producers Association webpage](#).

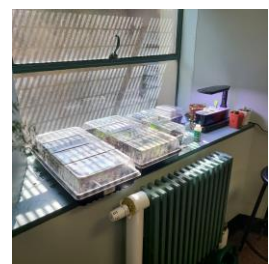
- Check in with your favorite garden center! March & April are common opening months to start getting your plant fix!
- The [Scantic Spring Splash](#) is March 30th. Spectate or join in this canoe & kayak race to kick off spring!
- Visit Elizabeth Park's [2024 Spring Greenhouse Show](#) March 1st-March 8th
- March 2nd - [Early Spring Garden Planning Event](#) at the Waterford Public Library
- March 30th - [Vernal Pool Hike](#). Join DEEP Outreach Biologist Paul Benjunas and Naturalist Laura Rogers-Castro for a hike along the Beaver Marsh Trail to a vernal pool.

Educational Opportunities and Workshops

- March 21st - [Native Plants for Container Gardens with Duncan Himmelman](#). This webinar is hosted by the CT Horticultural Society.
- Check out [Maple Days at Old Sturbridge Village](#) and see how syrup was made in the early 19th century!
- [Well Water Testing Workshop](#), March 7th
- March 12th - [New Spring Color for Your Garden](#) webinar hosted by Monrovia
- March 9th - [Wildlife in Connecticut's Changing Landscape](#). Paul Colburn, a CT DEEP master wildlife conservationist, presents a natural history of Connecticut from the early 1600's, when European colonists arrived, to the present.
- March 14th - [CT Compost Conference](#)

March Gardening Tips

1. Using sterile growing mix for starting seeds reduces problems with damping-off fungi. Avoid overwatering, which encourages root rots.
2. Seeds of cold weather vegetables like spinach, peas, lettuce and broccoli can be directly seeded as soon as the soil is workable.
3. Before new shoots emerge, cut back last year's stalks on perennials and grasses.



4. Move woody plants before they begin new spring growth; transplant as soon as the soil is workable.5. Begin [fertilizing houseplants](#) with a water-soluble fertilizer as they resume active growth.

5. As ground becomes workable, de-thatch the lawn if you find an inch or more of thatch; seed any bare spots.

6. If you potted bulbs for forcing last fall, check their progress. Soil should be barely moist. If tips have sprouted and have a few inches of growth, bring the pot into a cool, bright room (50 to 60 degrees F). Gradually expose the plant to increasing warmth, indirect sunlight, and increased watering. Feed once a week with half-strength houseplant fertilizer. To help the stems grow straight, turn the pot every day. When buds and foliage are fully developed, bring in full sunlight, and enjoy!

7. Once your garden beds thaw, remove old garden debris such as leaves, stalks, and seed heads to reduce the presence of any overwintering diseases and pests.

8. [Thin bramble plantings](#) (raspberries, blackberries, etc.) to increase air circulation and reduce stem and leaf disease problems.

9. Clean out bluebird houses! They start looking for nesting spots in early March.

10. Start cleaning containers and pots so they are ready for planting. Inspect for chips and cracks.



[More March Gardening Tips](#)

Notice something going on in your garden? The UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory diagnoses plant problems including diseases, insect pests and abiotic causes. Submitting a sample is easy! For details, visit the [UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)

Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micronutrients: Send your soil sample in for testing now to avoid the spring rush. For details on sending a sample, go to the [UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

Did You Know...

Nursery wholesalers and greenhouse growers may sometimes have different product lines for independent garden centers and big box stores.

As you start your garden shopping this spring, consider shopping at different locations to find new and unique plants for your projects!



*This Month's Newsletter Contributors:
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For Gardening Questions Visit our website: [UConn Home and Garden Education Center](#)

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center: We are on a collaborative journey working together with farmers, families, communities and businesses to educate and solve problems concerning food, health and sustainability.

Join us.

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center



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WHAT WE DO AT THE UCONN HOME AND GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER

Plant, insect, and plant disease identification and control options

Advise clients on plant selection and cultural requirements

Receive samples for diagnosis either by drop-off or mail

Give presentations on gardening topics including IPM, pollinators, lawns, invasive plants and insects, landscaping and gardening with native plants, gardening to support bees, birds and wildlife

Staff a booth every year at the CT Flower and Garden Show- bring soil samples for pH testing & your gardening questions

Publish weekly blogs and a monthly newsletter available for free by subscription

Publish fact sheets, newspaper, and magazine articles

[Unsubscribe](#)

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