

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

Spring is the time to get your garden in order



Every season brings a different set of chores in the garden. Spring is an exciting time for gardeners. It can also be a bit overwhelming. Here is a helpful list of chores that should be tended to in the spring.

Pruning — For early blooming shrubs such as forsythia and viburnum, prune them as soon as blooms have passed. Early spring is also an ideal time to prune your roses.

Deadheading — Remove spent flowers from bulbs, but leave the rest of the plant as is for the time being.

Weeding — Pull weeds from your beds and borders before they have a chance to take hold and spread.

Composting — Tend to your compost if it has been neg-

lected over the winter. If you do not have a compost bin, spring is the time to start one.

Tools — Spring is a good time to prepare your tools for the oncoming gardening season and to make any necessary repairs or new purchases.

Plant — Spring is a great time to add new plants to your garden. Be sure, however, that all threat of frost has passed. Plant such things as trees, shrubs, hardy annuals and summer blooming bulbs.

Fertilize and mulch — Fertilize and mulch beds and borders. Spring is also a good time to fertilize fruit trees.

Staking — Stake plants that may be prone to wind damage during the unpredictable spring weather.

Lawn care — Spring is the best time to start a new lawn from seed. For established lawns, you should start mowing in the spring, but don't initially cut the grass very short for the first few times.

Of course, whether you start these chores in early, mid or late spring depends on the climate where you live, taking into account such factors as when the threat of frost has past, or when the ground is thawed enough to dig. I hope these tips will give you a good idea as to where to focus your attention in your garden this spring.

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Information taken from *HelpfulGardener.com*

Treating age-related macular degeneration

By **TRESA ERICKSON**

As your body ages, you may begin to experience changes in your health. You may lose some of your muscle mass, see a few more wrinkles and notice a difference in your visual acuity. Presbyopia, glaucoma and cataracts are some of the more common visual conditions associated with age. Another more serious visual condition that strikes those over 50 is age-related macular degeneration. Affecting more than a million Americans, AMD is the leading cause of blindness among senior citizens.

AMD occurs in two forms: dry and wet. Dry AMD is the less severe of the two and accounts for nearly 90 percent of all cases diagnosed. In the dry form, yellowish deposits called drusen collect behind the macula, an

area in the retina responsible for central vision. As the macula breaks down, the retina thins and vision loss occurs gradually. About one in 10 people who are diagnosed with dry AMD develop wet AMD. In the wet form, vision loss occurs more rapidly, as abnormal blood vessels break through the cells beneath the retina that have already been weakened by dry AMD. The blood vessels then begin to leak fluid and blood behind the macula, blurring central vision and resulting in the loss of it within weeks or months.

AMD may occur in one eye or both, and symptoms may not be visible until later stages of the disease. The best way to protect yourself against AMD is to have routine eye exams. Your doctor can dilate your eyes and check the retinas for early

signs of the disease. They may also perform other tests, such as having you look at an Amsler grid or looking at your maculas through an ophthalmoscope.

As AMD progresses, everyday tasks, like reading a recipe or threading a needle, become difficult. Distinguishing between colors and adapting to darkness may also become difficult. If you are diagnosed with AMD, help is available. Laser surgery, photodynamic therapy and now a nutritional supplement may slow down the progression of AMD.

Certain types of wet AMD may be treated with laser surgery, a painless outpatient procedure. During surgery, a laser will be used to seal leaking fluid and slow the progression of the disease. Although it won't restore vision, it may preserve what

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