By John Martin, Albany Master Gardener

As we approach spring (actually some consider it to be meteorological spring on March 1st), you may be anxious to get out in the gardens. But what can be done if there is snow on the ground or even when the snow is gone and the grounds are starting to thaw but it is still too early to plant? Here are a few tasks you can consider as a lead up to actually having fun in the garden:

- Dig out all those gardening tools, clean them off, sharpen those that need sharpening and replace those that you no longer feel serve their purpose
- Think about what worked and what didn’t work last year, then evaluate your beds for available space and make a planting plan
- Clean out any birdhouses; you may have to make room for new families
- Turn your compost
- Prune your roses
- Once the ground begins to thaw, test your soil for pH and nutrients and amend accordingly
- As soon as feasible, clean out all beds and cut back perennials to allow for new growth and minimize places for weeds to grow
- If you haven’t already ordered your seeds, try to do this as soon as possible before the types you may want are sold out
- If you are starting seeds indoors, lay out your plan for timing and clean up and/or purchase growing supplies. Note that there are a number of charts that you can look to for timing of indoor plantings, e.g. https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/

These are just a few tasks that you can do as a means to get ready for the planting and growing season. As the weather improves and things start to bloom, many other outdoor garden activities will arise so taking care of these will leave you time for more fun in the yard.

*Have fun and happy growing!*