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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

**DENNIS SMITH
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GREGG COUNTY**

Garden Checklist for March

March starts the beginning of a very busy and exciting time for many home gardeners. There are many chores outside that require attention this time of the year. Following are some of the items that we need to make time for in the weeks ahead.

Make plans to attend the Annual Gregg County Master Gardener Landscape and Garden Seminar set for Saturday, April 1, 2006. The seminar will begin at 8:00 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church Faith Center in Longview. Advance tickets are \$10 and are available at the Gregg County Extension office. Excellent speakers, vendors, door prizes and refreshments. Complete details are available at: <http://greggmastergardeners.org>.

Prepare beds for planting flowers and vegetables. You may want to consider renting or buying a garden tiller to speed up the process; however, a strong back and a garden fork will still do an excellent job.

For every 100 square feet of bed area, work in a several-inch layer of either compost, pine bark or sphagnum peat moss, plus 5 pounds of balanced fertilizer.

Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March. *Do Not Prune Crape Myrtles*. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as soon as they finish blooming.

Select and order caladium tubers as well as geranium and coleus plants for late April and early May planting. Do not plant caladiums until soil temperature reaches 70 F.

As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.

Beware of close-out sales on bare-root trees and shrubs. The chance of survival is rather low on bare-root plants this late in the season. Your best bet at this time of year is to depend on container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants for landscape use.

Start hanging baskets of petunias and other annuals for another dimension in landscape color.

Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.

Dig and divide summer and fall flowering perennials just before they initiate their spring growth.

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