

6 THINGS TO KNOW!

About Pre-Spring Gardening

**Tiffany Baca, Public Affairs Manager
Municipal Water District of Orange County**

With mild winter temperatures, February feels like springtime in Southern California. Citrus trees and succulents are blooming, bees are hard at work pollinating first blooms, and native plants have gotten their first long drink of pure rainwater in nearly a year. However, despite the itch to begin dropping new plants into the soil, it is still winter, and water-smart gardeners know not to rush the seasons. However, there are still plenty of things to do right now that can set up your garden and surrounding landscape for long-term success.

Did you know? Planting before the soil warms up can cause many problems for new sprouts, including stunted growth, wilting, and increased vulnerability to disease. By embracing a few practical habits, you can eliminate unnecessary time, money, and work spent trying to save struggling plants and get a jump start on creating a healthy, water-smart environment for established plants and new seedlings to thrive.

Here are a few pre-spring gardening activities to get you started:



1

TEST YOUR WATERING SYSTEM.

If periodic rains continue, keep your irrigation system turned off. Now is the perfect time to manually run each irrigation zone on your smart controller to ensure there are no leaks and adjust drip lines according to your spring garden plan.

2

REPLACE OUTDATED EQUIPMENT.

Save up to 50 gallons of water per day by converting antiquated spray heads to drip irrigation! MWDOC offers rebates on an array of indoor and outdoor water-saving devices. Visit mwdoc.com/rebates to learn more.

3

DETHATCH LAWNS.

Remove [thatch](#) that prevents water and fertilizer from reaching your lawn's root system. Consider replacing non-functional grass with drought-tolerant plant options, and use up to 70% less water outdoors! Visit mwdoc.com/turf for available rebates and landscape assistance programs.

4

PULL OUT WEEDS.

Unwelcome weeds are expected after a good rain and when the weather warms up. Pull weeds now while the ground is soft and before they produce flowers or seeds. Weeds grow fast, stealing precious water and nutrients from other plants in your garden or landscape.

5

REFRESH YOUR MULCH.

A 3-inch layer of mulch reduces the amount of water needed during the growing season by significantly improving soil moisture, suppressing weeds, and protecting against extreme temperatures. Organic mulch also decomposes over time, improving overall soil quality.

6

START SEEDS INDOORS.

Although it's too early for in-ground planting, you can start spring and summer crops indoors. Save limited resources by knowing how much space you have to work with and only planting vegetables and fruit you will eat.