By MARGE ALPERN

The excitement of spring for the orthern garden begins with sighting the first robin and the first blooming

Certainly the crocus, which so closs-presembles the color and shape of the Easter egg, deserves to be the most popular of the early bulbs, but the less-er known winter acontile or eranthis is being discovered by many gardeners. Eranthis may bloom even before the crocus. It is a little yellow buttercup-like flower posed above a fine green, frilly pollar. Unlike the crocus, this brave bloomer never seems to mind the late winter conditions it frequently has to endure and will hold its flowers through it all.

At its best when naturalized in large masses in open woods, eranthis seeds itself freely and soon forms colonies.

itself freely and soon forms colonies.

THE ERANTHIS TUBERS must be planted in early fall, preferably late August or early September, and are available through many of the fall seed catalogs. Like lily bulbs, eranthis can't will dry out and and not survive to the following spring. This is the reason for the less than 100 percent success frequently reported. Plant the tubers firmly about two inches deep ln shade or half shade, about eighteen bulbs to a square foot for a charming solid effect. Unlike crocus and most spring blooming bulbs, eranthis does not have

a blade-like leaf that gets dry and straggly as it ages. The charming, al-most Elizabethan, collar of leaves con-tinues to grow and actually becomes quite large, forming an attractive ground cover that remains green and tidy for some time after the flower has failen.

As the eranthis fades, the blue scilla, As the erantus rates, the bute schin, hyacinth, daffodils, grape hyacinth and all the tulips poke their determined green tops above the mulch and soil. Be sure you aren't making life more difficult for them by keeping them covered too long.

cult for them by keeping them covered too long.

It int necessary to wait until frost and freezing temperatures are completely past. It is especially important to uncover the early blooming bulbs because they will prematurely begin to grow under the heavy mutch. The stems will twist and turn as they try to work their way through. So gently use your fingers and reach in to remove the leaves and other mulch.

ROSES AND PERENNIALS may also sprout too soon if kept under the warm mulch which encourages growth. If uncovered, the plants will remain dormant until they are naturally ready to sprout. More roses are said to be lost in our region from winter protection left on too long than from that taken off too early.

lett on too long than from that taken off too early.

Because last winter was so mild, losses among roses are considerably less than in prior years, and you probably will be buying fewer replacements

than usual. But since the All-American Rose selections for 1980 are reported to do exceptionally well in our area, it will be hard to resist purchasing the new ones with their romantic names of Love, Cherish, and Honor.

Like most rose gardeners, I have my favorites and would like to recommend a few special old timers. Spartan (red-orange), Curyel Imperial (red), Tropicana (red-orange), King's Ransom (yellow), and the simple single Betty Prior (jink) are among my choices of roses.

My purchase for this year will be

My purchase for this year will be Aloha, a rose I have admired for many years in the garden of my friend, Louise Serafini of Troy, Louise is one of the finest gardeners in our area. Everything grows, thrives, blooms and glows under her devoted and knowledgeable care, and if she recommends it, I'll try it.

it.

As the long-awaited spring arrives and we think about nourishing the dormant plants, bear in mind that roses are heavy feeders and are known to benefit from organic feeding. Banana peel, high in potassium, has long been used as a fertilizer, and fish heads or seafood shells also can be dug down deep into the surrounding soil.

ENERGY. We can't afford to waste it.

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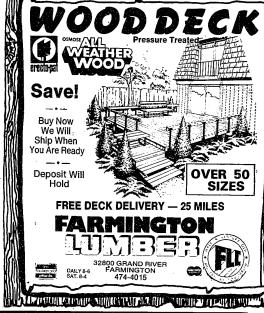
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