

What to Do in February

By: Jackie Sledge

Member of the Big Country Master Gardeners

Did you make your 2023 resolutions for your yard, garden, or landscape? We're almost at the end of January, and it is time to look at the tasks for February to keep you on track.

February can be an unpredictable month with frigid temperatures (remember the last couple of Februaries) or weather warm enough that the fruit trees start budding out and dormant plants show signs of spring growth. The major resources for the monthly tasks listed below are *Lone Star Gardening* by Neil Sperry and *Texas Garden Almanac* by Doug Welsh.

Planting tips for February:

- Plant cool-season vegetables – onions and snap peas early in the month; Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, and potatoes mid-month; spinach, leaf lettuce, chard, carrots, radishes, turnips, beets, and other leafy and root vegetables late in the month. You can grow cool-sensitive plants in containers so you can move them inside when cold temperatures are predicted and plant them in the ground after the weather warms up.
- Plant cool-season annual flowers such as pinks and snapdragons early in the month and wait to plant larkspur, ornamental chard, petunias, poppies, stocks, and others later in the month.
- Dig and divide summer and fall-flowering perennials such as mallows, cannas, fall asters, and salvias before they start growing later in the month.
- Native trees and shrubs that need to be moved to new locations can be relocated this month. Get as much of the root system and soil as possible, replant at the same depth, and remove 40-50% of the top growth because of the loss of part of the root system.
- Plant fruit trees, grapes, and berries that are recommended for this area. Prune 50% after planting to help them get a good start.

Pruning in February:

- Prune groundcovers such as Asian jasmine, mondo grass, and lirioppe. They can be cut at 4-5" with a line trimmer or mower early in the month.
- Prune evergreen shrubs to shape them. Use lopping shears and hand pruners for a more natural looking result.
- Prune nandinas. Cut the tallest canes to the ground and leave some shorter stems so the plants will get back to compact growth.
- Remove damaged or unwanted branches from summer-flowering shrubs and vines.
- Do not top crape myrtles to reduce their height. Plants that have been previously topped can be cut to the ground and retrained.
- Prune peach and plum trees early in the month before buds start to swell. Keep them 10-12' tall and 15-18' wide.
- Prune roses on Valentine's Day.

- Scalp the lawn late in the month. Drop the mower blade by 1 or 2 notches and bag the clippings to use in compost or as mulch.

What to feed in February:

- Feed new trees and shrubs that were transplanted.
- Feed cool-season turf late in the month but wait until April to feed warm-season grass.
- Feed cool-season color plants every 2 to 3 weeks to keep plants growing and blooming.

Miscellaneous tips:

- Check your irrigation system for proper performance. Call a specialist to fix problems now before the spring rush.
- Check your mowers and trimmers to be sure they are ready for spring. Get them repaired or tuned up now so they will be ready to use.
- Continue to provide light and water for plants being kept indoors before they are put outside from spring to fall.
- If there is a late frost or freeze in the forecast, cover plants with frost cloth before it turns cold. Remove the cover after the temperature is well above freezing.
- Winter drought along with windy, freezing weather is devastating to plants. Water lawns, landscapes, gardens, and trees at least twice this month if there is no rain.
- Remember to provide water and food for birds and wildlife.

It's not too late to make landscape and garden plans so check out garden magazines, plant books, and online resources for ideas. Be sure the sources you use provide information for Texas, and more specifically our part of Texas. I like the Aggie Horticulture website (<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>) because it provides information specific for counties.

Remember that February is an unpredictable month and plan for the weather ups and downs. As my gardener grandmother would say, "Get outside and soak up the warm sunshine, but watch for cold snaps. Don't get eager and put those baby plants out too early."

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you will like our Facebook page and visit bcmgtx.org for Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!