

What to do in January!

By: Jackie Sledge

President of the Big Country Master Gardeners

I can't believe it is already the end of December! This is the time of year when we look back to see what we accomplished and then take time to make resolutions for 2023. When we're thinking about what we want to accomplish next year, we need to remember to set goals for our gardens, yards, and landscapes.

So, let's start the year with what we should do in January, and at the end of every month this year, we will have articles regarding the tasks for the next month to try to keep us on track to accomplish the goals we set for the year. The major resources for the monthly tasks listed below are *Lone Star Gardening* by Neil Sperry and *Texas Garden Almanac* by Doug Welsh.

Plant in January? Absolutely! Here are some planting tips for the month:

- Plant spring bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, and Dutch iris early in the month and in well-prepared beds.
- Plant cool-season annuals such as pansies, pinks, snapdragons, dianthus, violas, stock, and ornamental cabbage and kale.
- Plant fruit and pecan trees, grapes, and blackberries either from containers or as bare-root plants. Be sure to select varieties that are recommended for our area.
- Plant snap peas and onions late in the month.
- Plant trees and shrubs. Any trees or shrubs that need to be moved to a different location should be moved while they are dormant.
- Start flower and vegetable seeds indoors now to have transplants for your yard and garden in the spring.

Pruning in January:

- Prune crape myrtles, summer-flowering shrubs, and vines. Don't commit "crape murder" by cutting off or flattening the tops of crape myrtles.
- Prune evergreen shrubs to reshape them and remove any damaged or dead parts.
- Remove damaged or dead branches from shade trees and fruit trees.
- Remove mistletoe from tree limbs every winter. This should be done when the clumps are starting to grow.
- Cut off dead parts of perennials. If you can tolerate the ugly dead plant parts, delay pruning until February, March, or early spring. The damaged or dead plant material provides insulation for the healthy plant parts and serves as shelter for birds and insects.

What to feed in January:

- Feed winter annual color plants, late winter perennial color plants, greenhouse plants, and house plants with recommended fertilizers or plant food.
- Feed fescue lawns and temporary ryegrass turf late in the month to promote early growth.
- Feed any plants that have root loss or damage with liquid root stimulator.

Miscellaneous tips:

- Apply broad-leafed weedkiller to control clover, dandelions, henbit, chickweed, and other non-grassy winter weeds.
- Be prepared with frost cloth, blankets, or tarps to protect plants during extremely cold weather.
- Check plants for scale insects and treat problems with horticultural oil spray.
- Mulch beds to help with temperature control and control weed growth plus help conserve soil moisture. Use wood mulch, compost, pine straw, fallen leaves, or grass clippings.
- Take mowers and other equipment for repairs and servicing before the spring rush.
- Get a soil test from Texas A&M Soil Testing Lab. You can get information and bags for soil samples from the Extension Office.
- Water during dry spells because dry plants tend to be more susceptible to cold damage. Water if the ground is dry and there will be a frost or freeze. Water at least once in January if there is no significant rain.
- Remember to provide water and food for birds and wildlife.

Now let's go back to planning and setting goals for our landscape. This is a great time to order seed catalogues to see what's available and what's new. Check out garden magazines, plant books, and online resources (my favorite website is Aggie Horticulture at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>). Be sure that the sources you use provide information for Texas, and more specifically our area of Texas. January is the perfect time to curl up under a warm blanket, look at plant pictures, and plan new additions to your landscape.

Happy New Year, and Happy January Gardening. If you have any questions, you can call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We will do our best to respond to your questions. We hope you will like our Facebook page and visit bcmgtx.org for Big Country Master Gardener future events.