



## FEBRUARY IN THE GARDEN

Sources: Texas Garden Almanac by Dr. Doug Welsh, Professor & Horticulturist/Texas A&M University, Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc. ([www.fbmj.com](http://www.fbmj.com)) and A Garden Book for Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast by Lynn M. Herbert and the River Oaks Garden Club.

### Garden Tasks



- \* Fertilize cool-season annuals one more time this month to prolong blooming and plant vigor.
- \*Apply horticultural oil to fruit trees to kill insect eggs.
- \*Prepare vegetable and flower beds for spring planting by adding compost.
- \*Water all of the landscape once or twice this month in the absence of rain or after several windy days.
- \*Trim up perennials that may have been damaged over the winter. This is a good time to divide, separate, and transplant perennials.
- \*This is the last month traditionally for pruning roses. The Houston Rose Society hosts an annual pruning workshop each year at their February meeting. Go to their website for more information.
- \*Keep up with the weeding. It may be necessary to put down some pre-emergent this month to help control spring and summer weeds, but do not apply pre-emergent to vegetable gardens. Heavy mulching will help control new weeds from sprouting.
- \*Don't put away the frost blanket yet. Our last average frost date is February 14th and February can be our coldest month!

### What to Plant



- \*Early this month is the last chance to plant cool-season vegetables such as beets, carrots, turnips, radishes and leaf lettuces. It is also the last chance to buy bare-root fruit and nut trees. If you buy citrus trees they will most likely need some protection from cold temperatures until next month.
- \*Time to plant potatoes. Cut a seed potato into sections with at least one eye in each section. Let these sections sit in a warm, well-ventilated area for a few days to dry out. After planting continue to move the soil or compost up around the stems as they grow.
- \*February is traditionally rose planting month. Consider planting Texas tough Earthkind roses. Go to <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/earthkindroses> for a list of the cultivars.
- \*February is also time to plant tomatoes, but not until after the 14th and only if a freeze is not in the forecast. Most nurseries have their tomato transplants arriving in the next few weeks, so shop early for the best selection. If your soil's pH is lower than 6.5, add some lime at a rate of 1/2 pound per square yard of soil. Tomatoes like a pH of 6.5-7.5. You can purchase a soil test kit at many nurseries and garden supply centers. If you plan to use your tomatoes for preserving or making salsa, choose a determinate variety. All the tomatoes will ripen at about the same time. If you just want yummy fresh tomatoes for your salad or BLT, choose an indeterminate variety that will continue to produce over the whole season.
- \*There are still some cool-season annuals that can be planted now for added color and will do well until the heat really sets in. They are alyssum, stock, snapdragons, calendula, nasturtium and dianthus.
- \*Summer flowering bulbs can be planted this month. Plant gladioli every two weeks until May for continuous bloom.



Spring gardening may have to wait a while longer. Punxsutawney Phil, the nation's official weather forecaster, predicted 6 more weeks of winter. Don't put away that frost cover quite yet!