**February Calendar**

**Calvin Finch, PhD**

**Director, Water Conservation and Technology Center**

February is the last hurrah of the winter garden. Early in the month, you can still plant broccoli, cabbage, mustard, spinach and chard transplants. By seed it is not too late to plant English peas, lettuce, carrots, radish, turnips and beets.

To plant potatoes, obtain seed potatoes from your retail nursery or farm supply store. Cut them into pieces so that at least one eye is part of each piece. Let the pieces dry for one day and then plant them in a trench that is 1 foot deep. Place a piece of the seed potato every 2 feet.

Cover the seed potatoes with 2 inches of soil and then add more soil twice each week to cover the emerging potato stem except for the top inch. If you have the soil, this covering process can continue to produce a 1 foot mound of soil over the trench.

For the cole crops and greens that you planted last fall, fertilize them now with 1 cup of lawn fertilizer per foot of row. Fertilizer is especially important for onions. It is also important that they be thinned to 6 inches between plants. Use the thinned plants for green onions. Keep on the guard for cabbage loopers. Bt or Spinosad work well as a control.

Harvest your greens leaf by leaf as you need them. The same plan works for the root crops.

In the flower garden make an application of a slow release or winterizer lawn fertilizer to fuel the spring flush of blooms on snapdragons, stocks, petunias and other cool weather annuals.

Hybrid Texas roses can be pruned after Valentine’s Day. Remove stems growing into the middle of the plant to open the plant to an interval. Reduce height to about 3 feet tall and remove all but 3 or 4 main stems. The remaining stems should be growing at about a 60 degree angle from the center.

Tough modern roses and old-fashioned roses benefit by removal of dead and tangled stems but pruning is not as important.

After the pruning, fertilize the roses with lawn fertilizer (19-5-9 or 18-6-12 work well) every 4 weeks and begin your regular spray program and irrigation.

The traditional sprays for roses are Funginex for fungus and acephate for insects. Organic gardeners can try neem oil, sulfur sprays and Spinosad. Again the old-fashioned and tough roses do well even without a spray program.

February is also the fruit tree and landscape pruning month. For gardeners that were wanting to prune back freeze-killed stems (lantanas, petunias, esperanza, etc) for the sake of bird habitat now is a good time to complete this task.

Visit plantanswers.com for pruning instructions and diagrams for fruit trees.

It is a good time to plant shrubs and trees. Seek out the recommended varieties so that the plantings have a good chance of surviving without wasting water and requiring special efforts of care. It is especially important that gardeners select the recommended fruit tree varieties.

Bartlet pears, Elberta peaches and Red Delicious apples will not survive but Kieffer pears, Junegold peaches and Anna apples among other varieties do fine. For all the information on recommended varieties, visit plantanswers.com.

It is too early to fertilize the lawn but if you had trouble with sand burs and other weeds last summer, late in the month, apply a pre-emergent herbicide. Amaze, XL, and Crabgrass Preventer do a good job on sand burs.