**February Horti-Bull**

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It is hard to believe that we are back to another Spring gardening season.

You have one last chance to plant broccoli, collards, cabbage and chard by transplant early in the month. Production will not be as great as the fall crop but it is still worth it. By seed, plant lettuce, radish, rutabaga, turnip, beets and carrots. Onion transplants can also be placed for an early June crop. Look for the new Legacy variety. It is supposed to be more productive and sweeter than 10-15s. English peas can be planted early in the month along with potatoes.

In the flower garden, plant sweet peas and nasturtium by seed. Naturalized larkspur will be coming up like gangbusters. I always have to weed out the larkspurs in my snapdragons so they can bloom in March and April. Snapdragons, stocks, calendulas, alyssum and petunias will have a second bloom period beginning this month. Pansies, cyclamen and primula should all be growing and blooming well. Give all the cool weather annuals an application of fertilizer to support this spring bloom period.

Sometimes after Valentine’s Day, prune the hybrid tea roses. Open the middles and remove excessive side stems (leave 3-4). For diagrams, visit plantanswers.com. There are also diagrams for pruning fruit trees and other plants. Fertilize roses and fruit trees with slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9. One cup per fruit tree and one half cup per rose should provide nutrients needed for this spring flush of growth.

Apply dormant oil to fruit trees early in the month. Cover stems and trunks to suffocate scale and wintering insects. Apply dormant oil when 2 days above 45 degrees are forecasted. Dormant oil also is effective at reducing phylloxera and other aphids on pecans if your sprayer can do the job.

It is not too late to plant shade trees, shrubs, fruit trees and roses. New supplies have arrived at the nurseries and selection is best now. Select fruit trees that are recommended for the area because of chill adequacy, insect and disease resistance, and a rootstock that can cope well our soils.

Keep the bird feeders full. February is on the best month to observe wintering birds. It is also time to get the birdhouses up.