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**“February Calendar”**

It is hard to believe, but we have already passed through the coldest weather and are moving into the spring.

Early in the month, there is a chance to plant all the cool weather vegetables: broccoli, onion, cabbage, chard and collard transplants. Plant potatoes with pieces of seed potato at the bottom of a 1-foot trench and fill in the soil as the plants grow towards the soil surface.

With seed, you can plant carrots, radishes, beets, turnips and lettuce.

It is too early to put tomatoes in the garden, but they can be potted up in a 1- to 3-gallon container filled with potting soil and fertilized with Osmocote. Place the tomato in the sun and out of the wind. It also works if you have a greenhouse. If cold weather is forecast, move the potted tomatoes into the house until the cold passes. You do not want the tomato to harden off, (quit growing) so be conservative about the weather. Tomatoes will stop growing at 40 degrees.

If you planted onions in December, make sure you thin them out. Use the pulled plants as green onions. Onions and the greens also need another dose of lawn fertilizer. A cup of 19-5-9 or 18-6-12 per 8-foot row will do the job.

It is too early to fertilize the lawn, but February is a good time to aerate and top dress. Rent an aerator that cuts plugs out and places them on the soil’s surface.

Top dress with compost rather than a sand/compost mix. Compost is the active ingredient, while sand is the filler. One-half inch of the mix is all you need. One cubic yard will top dress 648 square feet of lawn.

At the end of the month, it is also a good time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide on the lawn if you want to prevent sand burs or crabgrass. Crabgrass Preventer, Amaze and XL all work well. For sand burs, a second application is recommended for mid-May.

If the winter weeds are evident in the lawn, mowing them on a regular basis is the best strategy. You can apply contact herbicides, but the herbicides work best in 70-degree weather.

In the flower garden, cyclamen and pansies should be blooming well. Snapdragons, stocks, dianthus and calendula should begin a new flush of bloom after the mid-winter lull.

A few years back many San Antonio area gardeners planted larkspurs with the hope that they would naturalize and provide blooms every spring. At least in my flower garden, the experiment has been a great success — too much of a success because the new seedlings take over the garden each spring unless I remove most of the plants. If the larkspurs are left, they will outgrow the snapdragons and other winter annuals in the garden. If you want to experience the winter annual blooms, remove all but a few of the larkspurs. Perhaps leave a row at the back of the garden.

February is the big pruning month. Late in the month, cut back all the frozen wood on esperanza, lantana, poinciana, duranta and similar subtropical plants.

On fruit trees, pruning should open up the middle for air and light, provide some height control and contribute to structure. Don’t be too conscientious in removing small stems along the branches and trunks. “Trashy middles” or “trashy growth,” as the foliage is called, protects the stems and trunks from sunburn.

Be especially sensitive to pruning crape myrtles. Do not overly prune them as they have been in the past. Just remove the dead wood.

Roses are pruned with the same purposes as fruit trees. For more detailed instructions and diagrams on pruning, visit [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com/).