

## February Gardening Calendar

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February is the primetime to aerate and top dress your lawn. Rent an aerator that cuts plugs from the sod so air, water and nutrients can penetrate to the roots. Follow up with top-dressing with one-half inch of compost and the treatment will be especially effective as the organic material penetrates the aeration channels and into the root zone.

Horticulture supply stores such as Quality Organic, Keller Material, New Earth and Fertile Garden Supply will deliver the compost you need and may even have aerators. Otherwise visit the nearest big box store or equipment rental store for the aerator. Some lawn care companies will do the work for you but spreading compost on the lawn is a low-pressure, day-dream job. Enjoy the good weather, experience some exercise and can think about good food, your next vacation or attractive movie stars.

Late in the month apply a pre-emergent herbicide if you had trouble with weeds in the lawn last summer. Amaze and XL are especially effective for sand burs and crabgrass.

Early in February is the time to make that last planting of the cool weather crops. Broccoli transplants, onion plants, cabbage, chard, kale will usually mature and make a crop before the hot weather arrives. Plant carrot, lettuce, beets, turnips, and radish by seed. It is also the time to plant potatoes. Refer to [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com) for the specifics of raising a potato crop. The potatoes aren't a heavy feeder but the greens and cole crops are so don't forget to prepare the soil with 4 cups of slow-release lawn fertilizer over every 100 sq. ft. of bed. Use a Bt product if the cabbage loopers infest the cole crops and greens.

In the flower garden give the cool weather annuals a side-dressing with slow-release lawn fertilizer. The snapdragons should resume blooming at some point in the month after a break because of the cold weather. They will bloom through April. Pansies will continue their bloom through to May. Dianthus could bloom into June if they are lightly trimmed back at the end of the month or in March. Remember to protect primula and cyclamen with slug and snail bait.

February is prime tree and shrub planting time. Consider Texas red oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, live oak, Mexican sycamore, bur oak, Chinese pistache or chinkapin oak for long lived well-adapted shade trees. Burford holly, Texas mountain laurel, standard pittosporum, sandankwa viburnum, standard yaupon holly, dwarf yaupon holly, nandina, dwarf Chinese holly, Mexican honeysuckle, and pomegranate are all good shrubs to consider depending on available space and light availability.

Prune fruit trees in February. Each species has a different recommended pruning pattern. Visit [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com) for instructions and diagrams.

Esperanza, poinciana, firebush, duranta, lantana, and the hot weather salvias can all be cut back to the ground.

It is also time to prune roses. The middles are opened up to let in sun and air and size is reduced with thinning cuts. Thinning cuts mean you cut the branch at its origin in a larger branch, rather than in the middle of the branch. Accompany the pruning with restoration of the mulch layer, add a cup of slow-

release lawn fertilizer, and restore the weekly spray program. Acephate works for insects and triforine is effective for fungus. Organic gardeners may try sulfur products, spinosad and neem oil.