

## Gardening Calendar for February

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Most gardeners had their fill of freezing temperatures in January but there is a good chance that we can have more cold this month. Keep your covers and heat sources close at hand! One desirable result of the cold weather is that the fruit species (especially peaches, plums, and apples) requiring chill hours to reload their chemistry and to bloom and bear fruit, should be in good shape.

The first of the month there is still an opportunity to plant the cool weather vegetables for a spring harvest. Plant broccoli, Swiss chard, cabbage, collards, and onion transplants. Plant the onions 3 inches apart in the row and use the middle onion for a green onion by the end of March to allow the remaining plants the space to produce large bulbs. A key to success with onions is to fertilize them generously at planting and every 3 weeks until harvest. Winterizer or slow-release lawn fertilizer works well.

Use seed for beets, English peas, carrots, radish, and turnips. Use pieces of seed potatoes with eyes every 18 inches in trenches 1 foot deep for potatoes. They can be harvested when the plants begin to bloom through the time that the tops die.

Most of the winter annuals had their blooms frozen during the freezes of January. If the foliage fared well expect the blooming to resume some time in February. Cyclamen is an exception. If the blooms and reserve flower buds were frozen they probably won't rebloom before they decline from the hot weather in May. To replace the blooms that were frozen in January, new transplants in full bloom can be obtained from the nursery. They will continue blooming through May.

February is the main pruning month. Visit [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com) to find diagrams showing how to prune grapes, peaches, apples and other fruits. Roses should also be pruned in February. The root hardy blooming plants such as lantana, summer salvias, esperanza, firebush, poinciana, duranta, and thyrallis can be pruned to ground level. Citrus and similar cold sensitive plants will mostly defoliate but all or some of the stems will survive. It is best to wait and cut above the kill line as soon as it is clear where it is. Sprouts will emerge from stems that survived and there will be a line below which is still green and living. To reduce disease carrying mites and insects apply dormant oil to fruit trees and roses. Spray the trunks and stems when at least 2 days of temps over 45 degrees are expected.

February is a good month to plant trees and shrubs. If you plant fruit trees, an 8ft. by 8ft. raised bed irrigated with drip irrigation works well. Be careful to plant low to medium chill varieties that can survive our alkaline soils and drought. Peach varieties that work well include Florida King, Junegold, and La Feliciana. Elberta peaches do not prosper in our conditions.

There is not much action on the lawn in February. It is too early to fertilize, and minimal water is needed. Late in the month pre-emergent herbicides such as Dimension or Crabgrass Preventer can be applied to prevent summer sand burs.

The leaves from some live oak trees may fall late this month. Let the leaves decompose on the lawn or use them for mulch. If you mow the leaves on the lawn they will decompose faster. Leaves are too valuable as mulch and a source of organic material to waste them through garbage pickup and dumping them in the landfill.