**February Hortibull**

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As cold as it has been in December and January, it is hard to believe that we think of February as being the introduction to spring.

In the vegetable garden plant potatoes, broccoli transplants, cabbage transplants, onions, carrot seeds, beets, radish, turnips, rutabagas and lettuce. If you wait too late into the month, the cool weather vegetables will get caught in the warm weather before they mature.

Tomato plants will be available at area nurseries but the soil is too cool to plant them. Instead put them up in a 1-3 gallon container filled with potting soil and Osmocote. Place the potted up plants in the sun out of the wind and be prepared to move them inside if temperatures below 40 degrees are forecast. The potted up tomatoes can be placed in the garden March 15 or later.

In the flower garden the pansies and cyclamen should be doing fine. They will bloom for another three months until hot weather arrives. Snapdragons, petunias, stocks and calendula will begin blooming again after the mid-winter lull.

If you have naturalized larkspur in the garden among the snaps and stocks, thin out all but one or two rows. They will grow over the top of the other winter annuals if you leave them to their own will.

Paperwhites, daffodils and cemetery iris should bloom this month. Give everything an application of lawn fertilizer.

Some of the wildflowers may also start to bloom; verbena, primrose and coreopsis will probably bloom in February. Remember that the wildflower and other naturalized flowers (paperwhites, etc) must be allowed to mature and drop seed if they have it. The foliage needs to brown naturally to replenish the bulbs.

There is not much action on the lawn, but it is an ideal time to aerate and top dress. Use pure compost as the top dress. The sand in some mixes is just a filler. Wait to fertilize until after mid-April or even May 1. Our warm weather grasses cannot use the nutrients until the soil warms and a new root growth begins.

The end of February is a good time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent summer weeds. Crabgrass Preventer, XL and Amaze all work well to prevent the germination of crabgrass and sand burs. If the winter weeds are taking over now, keep them mowed to prevent production of seed for next year’s plants.