

Get your garden ready in February

Here are some important tasks to put on your garden calendar for February.

February is a good time for pruning. To help prevent the spread of diseases, make clean cuts in dry weather and always sterilize your pruners between cuts.

In the Umpqua Valley, prune fruit trees when the weather is conducive for the plants to start growing, usually February to March. Fruit trees require training to develop a strong tree structure that can support heavy crops without limb breakage. Training helps bring a young tree into production at an early age and improve fruit quality. Pruning also helps to reduce overall tree size.

Blueberry plants must be pruned each winter, when the plants are dormant and before bud break. In the Umpqua Valley, that's anytime during the dormant period from December to early March. Correctly pruned bushes will increase in size during the establishment years, and yield per bush will increase steadily from the year after planting to maturity. When plants are mature there should



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be a good balance between fruit production and growth of vigorous new whips and lateral shoots, which are important for next year's crop.

Now is also time to prune and train your raspberries, boysenberries and blackberries.

Speaking of fruit, February is when the vast majority of fruit trees arrive in local nurseries and the selection is at its best for all types of fruit. Now can be your chance to get some of the hard-to-find types.

February is the time for pruning most roses. This includes all shrub-style roses; hybrids teas, floribundas, and grandifloras. Cut roses back to about 18 inches tall, just above a bud facing away from the center of the bush. Remove any small, spindly canes or damaged canes.

Note that climbing roses and ramblers are not necessarily

pruned in this way; they should be trained to fit the spot you are growing them in, and pruned to maintain the training.

February is a good time to prune shrubs that form their flower buds on new wood (i.e., growth that will occur in the coming spring). Examples include: abelia, beautyberry, butterfly bush, summer- or fall-blooming clematis, smooth hydrangeas, panicle hydrangeas, potentilla, Rose of Sharon, dogwoods, Japanese spirea, St. Johnswort, and summersweet.

Prune evergreen shrubs (yew, holly, and boxwoods) and evergreen trees (spruce, fir) in late winter or early spring when they are still dormant and before new growth begins.

February is the standard time for dormant spraying. This is defined as spraying your deciduous shrubs and trees that are disease or insect prone to help prevent infections later in the growing season. Dormant sprays will damage leaves, so that is why we use them when the plant is dormant and leafless.

Examples include copper, lime-sulfur (both for fungus), and horticultural paraffinic oils (for certain insects). Fruit trees,

roses and lilacs are examples of plants that benefit from dormant spraying.

It is also a good idea to make sure there are no leaves still clinging to these plants, and to rake and remove leaves before spraying if you did not already do so last autumn.

February is a good time to liven up those porch containers and, if your soil is workable, your garden beds as well. Primroses, cyclamen, and ranunculus all make their appearances in garden shops. For those who missed the bulbs in autumn, you can plant potted crocus, hyacinths and daffodils to help brighten things up.

The summer-flowering bulbs arrive inside the stores towards the end of February. Begonias, dahlias, lilies and many others will be available. Buying this way is less expensive than buying grown plants later, and there are many specialty bulbs that won't be available later.

February is one of the best months for planning and shopping for your vegetable garden, when all the new seeds are in good supply. It may not be time to grow tomatoes yet, but this might be your best chance to

find interesting varieties if you prefer to grow from seed.

Mid-February is the time for planting peas; they enjoy the cold. Spinach, kale, and other hardy greens can be planted now, and lettuce can be grown in a cold frame.

Some of your indoor plants may have thinned out over the winter due to lack of natural light, but now that the days are getting longer, your plants should start to recover. Be careful not to overwater your house plants, especially if you keep your house on the cool side.

Cyclamen, orchids, and Rex Begonias are available now to liven up your living room, and make a great gift for Valentine's Day.

Be sure to register for the OSU Extension and Master Gardener Spring into Gardening event scheduled for March 12. Visit our website at bit.ly/33k1QGp.

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