

## 7 Quick Tips For A Beautiful Spring Landscape From Rockwall County Extension Master Gardeners

Written & Edited by Michele Campbell and Linda Gates  
Rockwall County Extension Master Gardeners

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Schedule these winter tasks now, and say hello to a gorgeous spring!

**1 Prune:** A good time to prune most plants is in late winter. One exception is spring flowering plants. They bloom on last season's growth and should be pruned after they flower. Shrubs that bloom later in spring or summer usually do so from buds which are formed on new shoots. These shrubs should be pruned in later winter (January through February) to promote vigorous shoot growth in spring. Live oaks should be pruned, only if needed, in winter before February to minimize the spread of oak wilt. Remember to never "top" your crape myrtles. It is also important to remove spent vegetable crops from your garden. Diseased vegetable plants should be bagged and discarded to prevent the spread of disease.

**2 Mulch:** Apply 2 to 3 inches of mulch around the base of plants to insulate roots from the cold weather, help retain moisture, reduce weeds and maintain soil temperature. Keep frost cloth on hand and cover tender plants to protect from freezing weather. Mulch over perennials that die back to the ground for added protection.

**3 Water:** Water before forecasted frosts and freezes to reduce damage to plants, trees and lawns. Moist soil stays warmer than dry soil and water acts as an insulator for the plant. It's best to soak the soil a day or two ahead of predicted freezing temperatures to give plants time to pull in the moisture. Trees that you plant in fall need consistent watering as they enter their first winter. It is best to turn off automatic sprinkler and irrigation systems during winter. Water manually when needed.

**4 Don't Forget The Lawn:** You may need to water dormant grass periodically if it doesn't rain for several weeks or if we are experiencing warmer weather. Do not fertilize dormant grass unless the lawn has been overseeded. Keep fallen leaves off your lawn. They compact and trap moisture which can lead to turf diseases.

**5 Plant & Transplant:** Plant and transplant trees and shrubs now while they are dormant. Spring flowering bulbs such as daffodils can be planted now. Tulips & hyacinths that have been chilled for at least 45 days at 45°F can be planted after mid-December. Also, late winter is the time to begin planting cool season vegetables such as onions, peas, cabbage, spinach and much more!

**6 Weed Control:** Apply preemergent herbicides in February for broadleaf and grassy weed control in your lawn. If weather permits apply post emergent herbicides as needed to control winter annual broadleaf weeds. Be sure to read the label of your weed killer

and follow the directions. For common chemicals, 50°F is usually the lowest temperature where the product remains effective at killing weeds.

**7 Tend To Your Roses:** Mid-February is the recommended time to prune bush roses. To stimulate new growth and spring blooming prune by half making sure to cut directly above a bud that faces out from the center of the plant. Thinning and reshaping can be repeated in early August. Prune the plants back by one-third to encourage flowering in September and October. Climbing roses produce their flower buds on canes that grew the prior year so they should not be pruned until after spring when blooming has slowed. Remove weak and unwanted canes as they appear.

**Rockwall County Extension Master Gardener Association** is a 501c3 with a mission to provide research-based horticultural education and advice across Rockwall County. To sign up for our award-winning quarterly newsletter, EnviroSmart, or to find out about upcoming youth and adult classes and events, visit [txmg.org/rockwall](http://txmg.org/rockwall).