

Bell County Master Gardener  
Tip of the Week  
By Mary Lew Quesinberry  
“Time to Get Busy”

It may seem like the dead of winter but now is the time to get busy in the landscape. Continue to gather fallen leaves to the lawn areas and mulch with the lawnmower to add micronutrients to the soil.

Perform a soil test on your gardening and landscaping areas. Soil testing bags and instructions can be picked up at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1605 North Main, Belton. Hours are 8-12 and 1-5. The cost of a basic test is \$10.00; phone 254-933-5305. The results are back in 10-14 days.

Remove weeds and nourish the soil with organic matter in your gardening areas. Dr. Doug Welsh, extension horticulturist at A&M, recommends adding leaves, aged manure, pine straw and wood chips to the garden area now so they will have time to break down before spring planting.

Take the time to prune, before new growth starts and remove broken, diseased limbs, and branches. Remove branches that rub or cross another branch. Remove suckers and water spouts (fast growing branches that grow straight up and are parallel to the trunk).

Most roses are usually pruned February 14th. But climbing roses are pruned immediately after spring flowering. Old Fashioned and antique roses are pruned to fit the landscape area and please prune no more than 1/3 of the plant's height. Modern hybrid roses are pruned back to a height of 18-24 inches. Diseased canes and branches that cross or rub should be removed on all rose types.

Plant the cool season transplants such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, leaf lettuce, and onions now, and sow seeds of beets, carrots and greens. Potatoes can be planted in mid February.

But warm season crops should be planted after last freeze date, that is March 16th in Bell County!

Put on your calendar and plan to attend the Master Gardener plant sale and spring seminar event on March 24th at the AgriLife Extension Office in Belton starting at 8 AM until 1PM. The varieties of plant material offered are chosen for their adaptability to Bell County. For a good selection, come early!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)

In the photo: Vertical gardening keeps crops off the ground and can be a garden focal spot. Try planting vining crops such as squash, peas, cucumbers and melons on a trellis, a discarded stump, fencing materials, or even on metal or wooden lattice.

