

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“December Gardening Chores”

Spring blooming bulbs, Crocus, Daffodil, Grape Hyacinth, Hyacinth, Narcissus, and Tulips can be planted now. If deer visit your garden, avoid planting tulips. There are so many different varieties and colors available in deer resistant bulbs that you won't really miss Tulips. Just when you are tired of cold, dark winter days, just one small area planted with Daffodils will lift your spirits with the promise of spring.

Fallen leaves will enrich your garden and should be considered as brown “gold” and not hauled off to take up valuable space in the landfill. Continue to manage your leaves by mulching with your lawn mower, adding to compost piles or use as mulch around plants. Most leaves will break down quickly and will feed the area with microbes and nutrients. Leaves left untended on your lawn will prevent light from reaching the grass blades and cause it to rot.

Continue to add trees to your landscape. Remember to soak the tree thoroughly before planting and keep it moist until it is established; more trees are killed by planting too deeply than by insect or disease so plant no deeper than it is in the pot. Trees planted now will develop their roots and have a head start on trees planted in the spring.

Resist cutting back your frost damaged perennials. The damaged foliage will help insulate them through the winter.

Winter months are a good time to evaluate the bones of your garden. You can easily see areas that need the addition or subtraction of plants. You may notice areas to add edging, walks or benches to your garden. Draw up a plan and mark where you have planted bulbs.

Food can be scarce for birds during the winter months. To encourage song birds to remain in your garden fill your bird feeders with black oil sunflower seed, nyjer, or safflower seed. The wild birdseed mixes with Milo and millet will attract undesirable birds. Provide clean water daily to your birdbaths. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: Spring blooming bulbs planted now will be blooming in early spring. Choose number one size bulbs and plant twice as deep as the length of the bulb.

