

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Ilene Miller
“Landscape Care Important Now”

Mild winter temperatures provide a great opportunity for working in your yard during January and February. Here are several gardening care tips which will pay off in a good start for your yard.

Check Moisture Needs: Drying winter winds and lack of rain can leave landscaped plants depleted of moisture and more susceptible to cold damage when that next blue norther arrives. Check your flowerbeds, container plants, shrubs, and turf weekly to determine when you need to water. If plants are wilted or showing signs of drought distress, water slowly and deeply to replenish soil moisture. Be especially careful of newly transplanted annuals such as pansies and flowering cabbage or kale, they will need supplemental waterings until their roots are firmly established.

Keep Beds Neat: As plants die back from winter frosts, cut back old, dead foliage to keep flowerbeds neat and attractive. Removing garden debris also eliminates shelter for garden pests and will help reduce insect numbers in the spring. Add fresh mulch because mulch conserves moisture and provides insulation for plants from cold weather.

Plan for Spring Planting: Winter is a good time to evaluate your landscape and plan for spring additions. Study your favorite garden references, order seeds and bulbs. Sow seeds in flats or containers if you have a protected area such as a greenhouse to get that head start on spring planting for favorites such as begonias, periwinkles, as well as vegetables. This is also good time to add organic materials such as compost or pine bark to your beds.

Transplant Out-of-place Plants: If you have small trees or shrubs that need moving to a better location in your landscape, now is the time to complete that gardening task. To compensate for lost roots in moving a plant, prune back the shrub or young tree before you dig it up and relocate it to a new site. Remove at least 1/3 to 1/2 of the top growth for a successful transplant. Water deeply and check plant frequently to make sure it has adequate water until the transplant is well established.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com