



# Grimes County Master Gardeners



## Leaping into Spring

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The forecasters are starting to look reasonably accurate about the winter weather this year. Because we have had a pretty mild winter so far and with about five to six weeks to go to the start of spring, there is a lot to do to get prepared for spring.

**PRUNING:** Before tree and shrub buds begin to swell, start pruning in February. The only shrubs you don't want to prune right now are spiraea, azaleas and camellias. And

please don't top off crepe myrtles! You can prune the spiraea and azaleas after they have bloomed. Fruit trees should be pruned to encourage better harvests. And of course, roses need to be pruned by mid-February to encourage maximum growth in the spring. Research the correct method of rose pruning before starting.

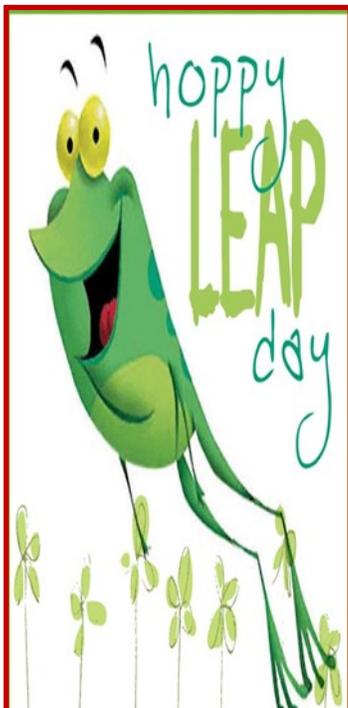
**PLANTING:** February is a good month to plant roses, bare-root fruit and nut trees plus blueberries and blackberries. Walker County Master Gardeners are selling barefoot trees February 1st for practically nothing. Get there early to catch the deals. It's not too late to plant many vegetables such as onions, potatoes, greens, lettuce, carrots, peas, and turnips. See Page Three on how to grow and cook collard greens.

**FERTILIZING:** Hit the newly pruned roses with high nitrogen fertilizer or rose food. You can apply 2 cups of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) per inch of trunk diameter to peach and plum trees. Start adding compost to flower beds and add slow-release granular fertilizer at the end of February. Add compost to vegetable gardens and around shade trees.

**LAWN CARE:** February is the time to apply preemergent herbicides for lawns that had weed problems last summer. Because we have had a mild winter you may have to reapply again in late May or early June. Start now to get healthy turfgrass growing which will help combat weed problems.

Keep freeze cloth handy in case we get another hard freeze. As many gardeners have reminded me, we have had bad freezes as late as mid-March.

And **FINALLY**, on page two, please read the delightful article submitted by **Kelley Pritchard** on a Homegrown Valentine's Day.



## A Homegrown Valentine's Day...Maybe

Ah, Valentine's Day, a day that most Americans associate with giving red roses, chocolates, and gifts like chocolate-covered strawberries and jewelry to your significant other. While I can't help you with the jewelry, here are some thoughts in case you want to grow your own gifts for next year.

Many of us already have our own *roses bushes*, and are familiar with their care, so I'll spare you the repetition. However, what if your rose bush produces yellow flowers, or pink, or another color, and you want to send a specific kind of floral message? Right now (between November and February) would be a good time to swap cuttings with your friends with other colors, and propagate new bushes. For good tips, go to: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/roseprop.html>

"Floral message?" you ask. That's right. Roses have held significance since the ancient Greeks, when they were associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Over the ages and in various countries, they have been cultivated and assigned myriad other meanings, and in Victorian times, specific colors of roses became associated with various emotions.

**Red** – love, respect, courage, passion, congratulations

**White** – purity, secrecy, innocence, reverence, worthiness

**Pink** – happiness, elegance, romance, admiration, sweetness, thank you

**Yellow** – friendship, caring, welcome, welcome back, joy

**Orange** – desire, enthusiasm, pride, happiness, achievement

**Lavender** – love at first sight, enchantment

So if you have a yellow rose bush, you can give the blossoms to a friend or young person without romantic connotations, but with your red rose bush you can woo your sweetheart.



Let's move on to the *chocolate*. If you want to grow your own cacao plant, you'll need to have a greenhouse, as cacao thrives in hardiness zones 11-13, in the understory of tropical rainforests. And no, you can't just plant a chocolate bar, no matter what we were told as kids. You'll need either a seed pod, or seeds that have been kept moist since removal from the pod. If they've dried out, they've lost viability. Place the seeds in a damp paper towel and keep them warm at around 80° until they begin to root. Once potted, you'll need to keep the plant warm for the next 3 to 4 years as it grows to about 5 feet. Then it should begin to produce, and with luck, will continue growing up to 50' tall, although most growers prune it back at about 10-15'. Of course, the beans themselves will need to be processed extensively before they resemble the ancient Aztec drink, or the candy we're so used to today. Hmm... the grocery store option is looking better and better.

Let's move on to the next favorite, which is much easier to grow in our climate: *strawberries*. Although right now may be when we want to eat those chocolate-covered strawberries, for our climate, now is the time to plant them, rather than harvest. Begin planting after the last threat of frost (February – March), in an area with full sun, well-drained soil with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5, where you have not planted strawberries or potatoes for the last 3 years. You can plant from seedlings, or crowns that have been soaked in tepid water for at least an hour prior to planting. Space plants 12-24 inches apart in rows 1-3' apart. They WILL spread!

If you want a large crop, rather than a small backyard patch, it's recommended to make mounded rows embedded with drip irrigation, made two plants wide for easy harvesting.

During my brief time working for an organic farm, I spent most of March and April harvesting strawberries, so I can assure you that they do grow well in Grimes and Waller Counties!

In summary, if you want to REALLY impress your significant other with your own home-grown Valentine's gift, start now to prepare for 2021-2025.



## *Kickin' Collard Greens*



There are several types of greens that can be planted in February in Grimes County, one of which, is Collard Greens (*Brassica oleracea*). Collard greens are considered a southern vegetable that was introduced into the U.S. through the slave trade. It is originally from Eurasia and is still a popular vegetable in the Mediterranean, Asia, Africa and Latin America. It gets its name from the word “colewort” meaning cabbage plant. But unlike a cabbage it does not form a head and the leaves are picked and consumed in recipes.

What’s so great about collard greens?

Well, it’s considered a *superfood* meaning it ranks as one of the most nutritious vegetables in the world. Here are some health

benefits gained by consuming collard greens: detoxifier, antioxidant, dietary fiber, anemia prevention, and bone strength.

Nutrient	Value
Vitamin K	388%
Vitamin A	36%
Vitamin C	21%
Calcium	8%
Vitamin B-6	5%
Iron	1%
Magnesium	2%
Protein	2%
Dietary Fiber	6%

- **When to plant:** February 10 - March 31; October 1 - October 31
- **Best variety for Texas:** *Blue Max, Champion, Flash, Georgia Southern, Top Bunch*
- **How to plant:** Build rich, loose soil into ridges 6” to 8” tall as the root system of a collard green can grow to depths of 2 feet or more. Space rows 36” apart.
- **Spacing:** 18 to 24 inches between each plant.
- **Fertilizer:** Side dress with 1 tablespoon/plant of garden fertilizer like 15-0-0. Apply again in 4 to 6 weeks. Collards needs a lot of nitrogen to maintain their dark green leaf color.
- **Watering:** Water deeply each week if it doesn’t rain.
- **Cold tolerance:** Collard greens can withstand temperatures of 20 degrees.
- **Harvesting:** Select the lower, outer leaves to harvest first. This will help propel new growth. For small plants cut at ground level.
- **Storing:** Collard green leaves can be blanched and frozen for future use.

### ***Kickin' Collard Greens Recipe*** ([allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com))

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbs. Olive Oil
- 3 slices bacon
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 pinch red pepper flaks
- 1 lb. fresh collard greens, remove stems, cut into 2” pieces

Directions:

1. Heat oil in medium size pot over medium-high heat. Add bacon and cook until crisp. Remove and set aside. Cook onion until tender, then add garlic just until fragrant. Add collard greens, fry until they start to wilt.
2. Add in chicken broth, bacon, salt, pepper, and pepper flaks. Reduce to low, cover and cook for 45 minutes until tender.

## *Are Lichens Killing Your Trees?*



One of the most common mutualistic relationships in the plant world is that of lichens. Made up of one part filamentous fungi and one part algae or blue-green bacteria, lichens are not considered a "true species." The unique combination results in a very hardy, weather-tolerant, and genetically diverse group of Nitrogen fixers that is practi-

cally self-sufficient. The fungal partner cannot survive alone, but instead thrives on the availability of photosynthetic products provided by the algae or bacteria.

Lichens are common pioneers on trees, shrubs, soil, and even rocks, but do they kill the host that feeds them? The truth is, whichever host the lichen



colonizes benefits from the added moisture and environmental protection, while also providing a place for the lichen to take root and establish a strong residence. Since they are not pathogenic or considered pests, there is no control method available today. While they are sometimes unappealing, removing the lichens mechanically can create fresh wounds that invite more severe plant pathogens to inhabit your landscape.

If a tree or shrub seems to be declining AND is covered in lichens, there is some other cause for the demise such as insect infestation, watering practices, or perhaps even legitimate plant pathogens. Overall, the



relationship is mutually beneficial and should not be a cause of worry.

Article from:

*Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab. plantclinic.tamu.edu/204/04/29*

## *Herbal Almanac*

Here are some herbs that can be planted in February (as long as you protect them against frost):

- Bay Laurel
- Lemon Grass
- Pineapple Sage
- Lemon Verbena
- Rosemary
- Mexican Oregano



## Continuing Education / Events

- Feb 1: Walker County Master Gardeners, “**Native Bareroot Tree Sale**”, 8–12 p.m., 455 Highway 75 North, Huntsville
- Feb 1: The Arbor Gate, “**Planning your 2020 Vegetable Garden**”, 10–11 a.m., Tomball
- Feb 5: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Getting Ready for Spring**”, 12–1 p.m., 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan, TX
- Feb 6: Waller County Master Gardeners, “**Planting for Pollinators**”, 9–10 a.m., Waller County Extension Office, Hempstead
- Feb 8: Waller County Master Gardeners, “**Local Birds and Habitats**”, 2:30 –4:00 p.m., Waller County Extension Office, Hempstead
- Feb 8: Growers Outlet, “**How to Prune your Roses**”, 2–4 p.m., Willis

# February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 
2	3	4	5 	6 	7	8 
9	10	11 	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 	19 	20	21	22 
23 	24	25	26	27	28	29 

## Continuing Education / Events

- Feb 8: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**Turf Grass Selections/Maintenance**”, 8–10 a.m., Tom LeRoy Educational Building, Conroe
- Feb 8: Montgomery County Master Gardeners, “**Growing Spring Vegetables**”, 10:30–12:30 p.m., Tom LeRoy Educational Building, Conroe
- Feb 11: Grimes County Master Gardeners, “**Monthly Business Meeting**”, 9 a.m.–11 a.m., Court Annex Building, Navasota
- Feb 18: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Spring Rose Care Tips**”, 6–7 p.m., Lick Creek Nature Center, College Station
- Feb 18: Grimes County Master Gardeners, “**Garden Workday**”, 9–11 a.m. Ext. Office
- Feb 19: Brazos County Master Gardeners, “**Grafting Made Easy**”, 12–1 p.m.; 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan
- Feb 22/23: Walker County Master Gardeners, “**Spring Garden Expo 2020**”, 9–4 p.m., Walker County Fair Grounds, Huntsville
- Feb 22: City of Conroe, “**Arbor Day Celebration**”, 9–1 p.m., Founder’s Plaza, Conroe
- Feb 29: Grimes County Master Gardeners, “**Leap into Spring Seminar**”, TBD

# Texas Master Gardeners

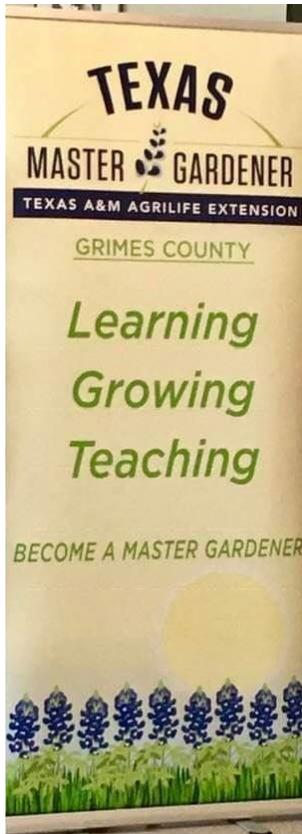
203 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: [txmg.org/grimes](http://txmg.org/grimes)



## Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the 20th of each month to: [pwparmley@gmail.com](mailto:pwparmley@gmail.com)



Our New Banner

### 2020 Board of Directors

- President.....Cathey Hardeman
- Vice President .....Jamie Bruns
- Secretary .....Paula Parmley
- Treasurer .....Herb Abraham

### 2020 Committees/ Chairs

- Advertising/Publicity .....Peggy Sloan
- Auditing.....Jena Jackson
- Community Garden.....Cathey Hardeman
- Co-op.....Fred Vesperman
- Social Media.....Jamie Bruns
- Fundraising .....Carol Garnet
- Historian.....Sharon Murry
- Intern Class Coordination.....Jamie Bruns
- Junior Master Gardener.....Kay Douglas
- Newsletter .....Paula Parmley
- Nominating.....Carol Garnet
- Timekeeping .....Martha Brogdon
- TMGA Awards .....Sharon Murry