

January Gardening Tasks

It's winter and you aren't quite sure what gardening tasks to do this month. Here are several items that can be completed in January.

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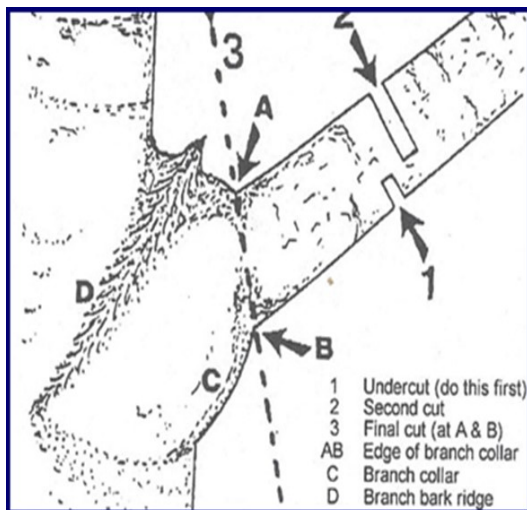


- Get a soil test. The first rule of gardening is to start with a strong foundation of good soil. If you have not had your soil tested yet, now is the time to get it done so you will know how to improve it. Don't guess, get it from the experts at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. You can pick up soil sample test kits at the Grimes County AgriLife Extension Office in Navasota. After getting your soil test results, amend accordingly so you have a head-start on spring planting.
- Prune and thin out trees: Look at our article on Page Two for the proper way to prune trees and shrubs and when to do so.
- Plant spring blooming bulbs now.
- Plant hardy trees, shrubs, roses, pecan and fruit trees now. Dormant fruit trees will have time to establish before spring growth begins. Montgomery County Master Gardeners will have a Fruit and Nut Tree Sale on Saturday, January 28th.
- Apply dormant oil to deter scale and insect pests.
- Rake up leaves so your turf grass isn't smothered. St. Augustine turf is not fully dormant and will benefit from sunlight to replenish its reserves.
- Mulch or shred your leaves and start a leaf mold bin.
- Start seedlings indoors: Get a head start on your spring garden seeds by starting them now indoors. See our article on Page Seven on tips.
- Don't prune off freeze damaged plant material, it actually provides insulation for the rest of the plant. Wait until March if you can stand the ugly mess or early spring to cut off the damaged parts.
- Water your lawn at least once in January if the rainfall does not exceed 2"- 3".



Proper Pruning of Trees and Shrubs

January and February are the months to start pruning large trees and shrubs. For most trees, pruning should take place in winter when the trees are dormant and new growth has not started. Pruning at the wrong time of year can increase insect and bacteria infestations. The only exception to this rule is spring flowering shrubs such as azaleas which bloom on last season's growth. They should be pruned soon after blooming has stopped which will allow for summertime growth and the addition of flower buds the following year.

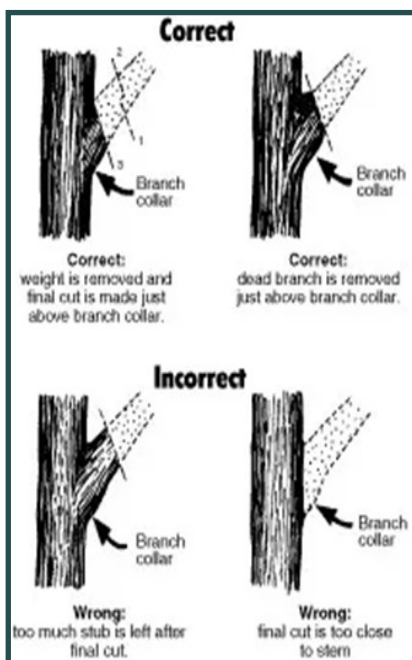


Why prune at all? Most trees and shrubs will naturally have branches that will fall off with time so it's not absolutely necessary to prune them. But if done properly and correctly, pruning can enhance the beauty and growth of a tree or shrub. The main reasons for pruning are: 1) to train the plant, 2) to maintain plant health, 3) to improve the quality of flowers, fruit, foliage, or stems, and 4) to restrict growth.

The diagram to the left shows the correct way to prune a tree branch. Correct pruning should be made as close as possible to the branch collar. Do not injure or remove the branch collar. Do not cut behind the branch bark ridge.

What is the branch collar? The branch collar, or sometimes called the callus roll, is the raised area that surrounds the base of every branch.

Wound Dressing: Once cut, you don't need to paint the open cut with pruning paint. This does little to prevent insect or disease damage. The only time to paint an open cut is on oak trees that might be susceptible to oak wilt so the bark beetle can't spread the disease. The picture to the right shows a tree branch collar healing up. After a few years of pruning the tree collar will completely cover up the tree wound.



Pruning Mistakes: Topping a tree. As seen mostly with crape myrtles, a gardener should never top off a tree to make it fit into a landscape. By choosing the right size for your landscape you will not be tempted to top a tree off. Topping makes the tree weaker and sends it into shock. It will also cause the tree to respond by replacing the lost branches with bushy immature growth.

Stub Cuts: Learn to recognize the collar of a tree limb. Proper pruning takes place right at the collar – not several inches away from it. This will cause damage to the tree eventually.

Flush Cuts: The opposite of stub cuts, is cutting too far past the collar. The reason pruning is done at the collar is so that the tree will naturally heal over properly.

Ripping Bark: Using dull blades can make for a messy cut which can lead to ripping the bark. Ripping bark is like cutting open the skin of a tree leaving it susceptible to fungus, pests and other damage.

It's Not Too Late Onion Lovers

It's not too late to plant onions. According to the Texas A&M AgriLife Vegetable Planting guide, from October to early February is the time to plant onion bulbs. In this area, you can grow yellow, white, and red onions and many feed stores are stocked with onion sets now. Below are the best varieties for our area.

Short Day (less than 12 hour day length)	
Yellow	Chula Vista, Cougar, Jaguar, Legend Linda Vista, Mercedes, Prowler
White	Cirrus, Marquesa, Texas Early, Crystal Wax
Red	Red Bone, Rio Santiago, Sakata Red, Red Burgandy
Intermediate Date (12-13 hour day length)	
Yellow	Caballero, Cimarron, Rivera, Utopia, Yula
White	Alabaster, mid Star, Sierra Blanca, Spano
Red	Fuego
Long Day (14-16 hour day length)	
Yellow	Armada, Capri, Durango, El Charo, Ole, Seville, Sweet Perfection, Valdez, Vaquero, Vega
White	Blanco Duro, Sterlin, White Spanish, Sweet
Red	Tango

Prepping: Select a site that will get full sunlight, free of weeds, and is well draining. Work the soil 8 to 10 inches amending it with compost so that your final planting site will become a loose, loamy soil. Spread a good 10-10-10 fertilizer and work into the soil 3 to 4 inches deep.

Planting: Plant onion sets 3/4 inch deep and 3 inches apart. Do not plant deeper than this, as onion bulbs prefer to sit close to the soil's surface.

Fertilizing: Onions are heavy phosphorous feeders so they like soil amendments that are low in nitrogen and high in phosphorous. Bone meal and rock phosphate are two good amendments that can be added. Apply when the onions have developed 5 - 6 leaves.

Watering: Water once a week in spring and more often during hot weather.

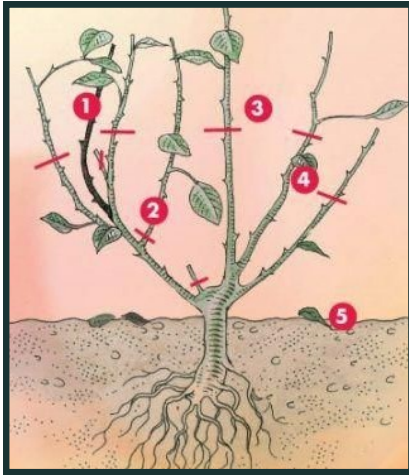
Harvesting: When you see the tops fall over, that means the onions are ready for harvesting. Gently pull out and lay on soil for 1-2 days to dry. Store in a cool, dry place away from heat.

Storing: Store in a cool, dry place away from heat. Do not wash dirt off until ready to use. You can braid and then hang or make a drying bench as seen in the picture below.



February is Rose Month

February in Grimes County is *Rose* month. This is a great time to prune, fertilize, spray and mulch your roses so that you have large beautiful blooms that are disease and pest free. Depending on the type of roses you have dictates the manner of care and pruning.



Pruning is the best method for shape and maintenance. If you don't prune at all then eventually your roses will become smaller and smaller. Traditionally heavy pruning, appropriate for Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and Grandifloras, is done around Valentine's Day. Use sharp, clean pruning and long gloves to remove dead or damaged canes as well as small, twiggy ones.

1. You can do this by cutting at a 45-degree angle above a strong outer bud with clean, sharp-edged pruning shears.
2. Inward growing canes should be removed to provide an "open vase" shape. Opening up the center will promote better airflow.
3. Cut the remaining canes 1/3 to 2/3. Make cuts just above an outward facing leave node.
4. Remove leaves from any remaining canes and dispose of properly to prevent the spread of any diseases.
5. After pruning, remove all weeds and debris from around the roses. Pull back any mulch and fertilize about one to two cups per bush of organic or specialized fertilizer. Water your rose bed thoroughly before and after the fertilizer has been applied.
6. Once bushes have been pruned, a clean-up spray consisting of Ortho Funginex and Malathion should be applied to both the bush and the ground area around the bush. This will take care of any over wintering fungus or insect problems.
7. Finally, replace or add an organic mulch to keep weeds down, help preserve moisture, and add nutrients to the soil.

Organic Rose Fertilizer Recipe

Use this recipe for one standard rose bush:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| · 1 cup alfalfa meal | · 1 cup cottonseed meal |
| · 1 cup fish meal | · ½ cup bone meal |
| · ½ cup blood meal | · ½ cup Epsom Salt |

Mix all ingredients together (for 1 plant use a 3 lb. coffee can and shake it to mix the ingredients). Rake the mulch away from the plant and pour the mix in a ring at the drip line of the plant. Do not scratch or dig it into the soil. Cover the mix with mulch and water the plant as you normally would. This feeds the plant and the soil for about 6 months. Apply in early spring and early fall for continuous feeding throughout the year.

*Sideways Planting**Soaker Hoses**Tomato Cages**Tomato Hornworm*

Tomatoes 101

You've successfully grown tomato seedlings from your seeds that you're ordered from the seed catalog. Now what?

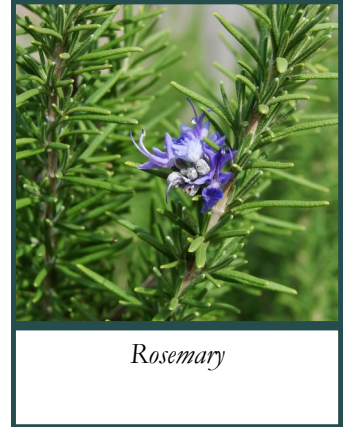
Here are some facts about growing tomatoes:

- **Timing:** In our area, AgriLife Extension recommends planting within 2-3 weeks of the last spring frost, usually mid-March. Tomatoes are best put in the ground as transplants because they need that extra time to grow and set fruit before the summer heat. So, you want to get them in the ground as soon as there is no danger of freezing.
- **Location:** Tomatoes take at least 6-8 hours of full sun to fuel photosynthesis which in turn produces the fruit. Tomatoes grown in less than the required sun hours will take longer to produce and will yield less fruit. So, pick a sunny spot in your garden that is not covered in shade.
- **Soil Preparation:** One of the most important stages is adding at least 3 inches of organic matter to your soil to help enrich it, aerate it and elevate it to improve drainage. Raised beds or containers are excellent for this purpose.
- **Watering System:** A drip irrigation or soaker hoses provide the best way to water tomatoes. This method waters the roots directly, keeps moisture off the leaves and can be set up on timers for automatic watering. Consistent watering is required for good growth. Start with 1 to 1 ½ inches of water per week. Adjust according to the weather. Like many plants, it's better to water deeply less often than to frequently water shallowly.
- **Planting:** Recommendations are to set tomatoes at least 3 feet apart to improve airflow and root development. Space out your tomato transplants accordingly. Dig the holes and add 2-3 tablespoons of fertilizer into each hole. Next, you want to harden off your transplants by putting them outside either on a cloudy day or with increased exposure to the sun. If your transplants have become leggy then you can plant them sideways by first removing the lower leaves.
- **Support System:** Set up tomato cages or use heavy duty staking to help elevate your tomatoes so they don't end up on the ground where they will be more subject to disease. Also, to keep transplants from being bruised by heavy winds, wrap plastic around the lower parts of the cages. This can be removed once the plant matures.
- **Pests:** As your tomatoes grow, watch for aphids, spider mites, hornworms, and leaf-footed bugs. You can wash leaves for aphids and spider mites, handpick tomato hornworms and spray if necessary, with an insecticide containing neem oil or pyrethrin.
- **Disease:** Wet, humid weather promotes disease so the purpose of good spacing, drip irrigation, and mulching helps to discourage disease. The most common disease to attack tomatoes is early blight. Consult with your extension agent or master gardener if you need advice on treatment.

Herbal Almanac

Here are some herbs that can be planted in February (*as long as you protect them from frost*).

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



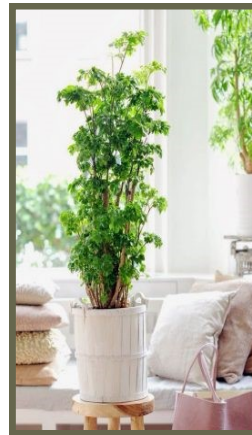
Rosemary

Best Medium/Large Indoor Plants

The humble houseplant can transform your home by improving the indoor environment and elevating your mood, one leaf at a time. Here are some medium to large indoor plants that can brighten up the ambiance of any room in your home plus be a focal or accent piece as well.



- ◆ Fiddle Leaf Fig
- ◆ Weeping Fig
- ◆ Rubber Tree
- ◆ Umbrella Tree
- ◆ Yucca
- ◆ Dragon Tree
- ◆ Parlor Palm
- ◆ Majesty Palm
- ◆ Corn Plant
- ◆ Fishtail Palm
- ◆ Ponytail Palm
- ◆ Norfolk Island Pine
- ◆ Philodendron
- ◆ Ming Aralia
- ◆ Swiss Cheese Plant



Tips on How to Grow Seeds Indoors



One way to start seeds indoors, use trays, such as egg cartons, to plant seeds. The extra room of a large clay pot isn't necessary until the plants have germinated and started to grow. Put several small holes in the sides and bottom of each compartment for ventilation.

- Fill the containers with a good potting mix made specifically for seeds. It is lighter in weight than regular potting soil, which is important for tiny seeds that are trying to push their way through the soil to sprout.
- Combine soilless peat moss along with a seedling mix with equal parts of perlite and vermiculite. This type of mixture promotes oxygen and retains moisture.



- Once the mixture is blended, place it in a large container and use warm water to moisten it.
- Fill the egg cartons or other small containers with the moist mixture.
- Follow the planting instructions listed on each seed packet.
- Cover the top of the tray with clear plastic wrap. This helps keep the potting soil moist.



- New seeds need to be kept warm. Place the seed trays in a warm location out of direct sunlight. If possible, use a heating mat placed under the tray for faster germination. You can also sit the containers on top of a warm spot such as the refrigerator.

- Once germination begins and seedlings will start to appear; the plastic wrap can be removed.

- The seedlings are now ready to be placed in a location where they will receive bright light. As an alternative, some gardeners choose to use grow lights.



- Use an organic liquid fertilizer once a week to keep seedlings growing strong.
- At some point, usually when the stems exhibit additional leaves, it's time to transfer the seedlings into larger containers filled with potting mix and compost.

- Seedlings are delicate, so move each one carefully to its individual pot.
- Water well.



- Place newly transplanted seedlings in a location that does not receive direct sunlight for a few days. This allows the seedlings to acclimate to their new environment.

- Water as needed, but be careful not to overwater.

- Keep in mind when choosing seeds, some plants take longer to sprout than others and some require more sun. To ensure all plants receive adequate sunlight, you can use grow lights.

GRIMES COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Speakers Bureau

Do You Need a Guest Speaker?



The Grimes County Master Gardener Association has a Speakers Bureau made up of friendly, knowledgeable Master Gardeners! We offer speakers on a variety of topics to garden clubs and other organizations upon request.

Please contact us 936-873-3907 or send an email to request a speaker at grimescountymastergardeners@gmail.com



Become a Grimes County Master Gardener



2023 Grimes County Master Gardener Class



Grimes County Master Gardeners will hold a Master Gardener Training Class starting January 2023.

Classroom courses will be held at the Navasota Center, 103 Stadium Drive, Navasota, Texas 77868.

Specific courses, dates and times of training are still to be determined.

Grimes County Master Gardeners will be offering more than 50 hours of on-line and/or classroom courses taught by Texas A&M horticulture specialist, staff and area horticulture experts to meet the 50 hour requirement to become a certified Texas Master Gardener. The class offers instruction in topics such as:

- ◆ Plant Growth and Development
- ◆ Soils, Water and Plant Nutrients
- ◆ Fruits and Vegetable Gardening
- ◆ Ornamental Trees and Shrubs
- ◆ Earth-Kind Landscaping
- ◆ Integrated Pest Management
- ◆ Lawn Care

Registration is \$220. Price includes a Master Gardener Handbook, Master Gardener T-Shirt, and Other Training Materials. Please contact Herb Abraham through the email or phone number listed below for more information on the class or to be added to the roster.

Learn, Grow, Share

Herb Abraham, Grimes County Master Gardener
Phone: 703-801-3273 (voice or text)
Email: herbabraham@gmail.com

Meet Our New Board Members

Grimes County Master Gardeners newly elected Board Members for 2023. From left to right: Nancy Vidotto (*Vice President*), Sparky Hardeman (*President*), Vicki Wood (*Secretary*), and Kyle Braswell (*Treasurer*)





Christmas Social 2022 20 Year Anniversary



Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **January Business Meeting on Tuesday, January 10th—9:00 a.m.** at the Navasota Center, Bluebonnet Room.

January 2023

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	30	31				

Continuing Education / Events

- Jan 28: Montgomery County Master Gardeners: Trees—Fruit & Nut Sale, 8:00 —12:00, Conroe, Texas
- Feb 6: Walker County Master Gardeners: “All About Trees”, 10:30 a.m., Huntsville Public Library
- Feb 11: Walker County Master Gardeners: Tree Sale, 8:00 a.m. 102 Tam Road, Huntsville, Texas

Events

Grimes County Master Gardeners will have their **February Business Meeting on Tuesday, February 14th—9:00 a.m.** at the Bluebonnet Room at the Navasota Center in Navasota, Texas.

February 2023

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				

Texas Master Gardeners

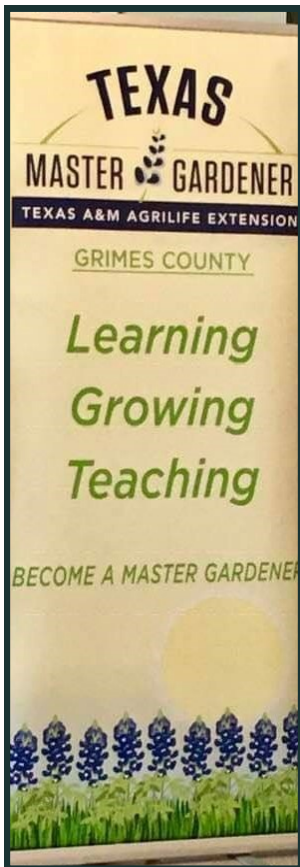
203 Veterans Memorial Drive
Navasota, Texas 77868

Website: txmg.org/grimes
Facebook: www.facebook.com/GrimesCountyMasterGardeners



Grimes County Master Gardeners

Please send submissions and photos by the 20th of each month to: pwparmlay@gmail.com



2023 Board

- President.....Sparky Hardeman
- Vice PresidentNancy Vidotto
- SecretaryVicki Wood
- TreasurerKyle Braswell

2023 Committees/Chairs

- Auditing.....Jena Jackson
- Community Garden.....Kady Hackenberg
- Co-op.....Jena Jackson / Ron Jackson
- Fair Judging.....Vicki Wood
- FundraisingCarol Garnet
- Historian.....Sharon Murry
- Intern Class Coordination.....Herb Abraham
- Junior Master Gardener.....Patti Sexton
- NewsletterPaula Parmley
- Nominating.....Carol Garnet
- Social Media.....Jamie Bruns
- Scholarship ProgramKimberly Hertan/Renee Harter
- Speakers BureauAnn DeWitt
- TimekeepingMartha Brogdon