February in the Tallahassee Garden

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Katherine LaRosa is a Master Gardener volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County, [http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/)

Garden art, whether whimsical or serious, can add an extra element of enjoyment to your garden. Finding just the right spot for something new takes a little bit of thought. While vegetation is sparse and the landscape is stripped down to its bare bones it’s easier to spot natural openings or pathways in the garden which might be just the spot for a little garden art. It’s also easier at this time of year to open up and define these areas by clearing out the underbrush and other unwanted vegetation.

Trees and Shrubs: Plant or transplant woody trees and shrubs. Prune summer-flowering trees and shrubs that flower on new wood such as crape myrtle, vitex, oleander, and abelia. If needed, prune camellias as they finish blooming. Overgrown broad-leafed shrubs including holly, ligustrum, and tea olive (but not needle evergreens such as junipers) can be rejuvenated by drastically cutting them back to twelve to twenty-four inches. Spray for over-wintering pests and scale as needed, using a horticultural oil spray and carefully following label directions.

Annuals and Perennials: Divide and transplant crowded clumps of ferns and groundcovers. Continue to plant cool-season annuals such as dianthus, petunias and snapdragons. Inside you may start seeds of warm-season flowers such as celosia, gloriosa daisy, nasturtium, zinnias and marigolds. Fertilize bulbs lightly as the foliage emerges, being careful not to get fertilizer on the foliage. In late February begin planting gladiolus corms every two weeks until mid-July. Cut back ornamental grasses and ragged-looking liriope to just above the new green growth that is emerging.

Lawn Care: Annual winter weeds in the lawn should be hand-pulled or mowed to prevent them from re-seeding next year. If winter weeds have been a big problem make a note on your calendar to apply pre-emergent herbicide in the fall.
**Fruit Trees:** Fertilize apples, peaches, nectarines, plums, pears, pecans, Chinese chestnuts, figs and blackberries. Fertilize blueberries after they finish blooming. Fertilize one-year-old grape vines now and monthly until July. Plant bare-root fruit and nut trees, grapes, blueberries and blackberries. Prune grapes. Prune young fruit trees to train the trees to the proper form.

**Vegetables and Herbs:** Prepare your garden for spring and summer plantings. Dig in composted grass clippings and leaves. Composted cow manure is also a good soil amendment for small areas. Don’t apply lime unless a soil test indicates the need. When lime is needed, apply it at least a month before planting. Seeds to start inside now for transplanting into the garden in March and April include lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant. In the garden sow beets, mustard, parsley, endive, escarole, carrots, collards, English peas, lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, and sugar snap peas. Plant Irish potatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, collards, and onions.

**Roses:** Plant bare root or container roses. About mid-month prune roses to remove dead and spindly growth and any canes smaller than a pencil. Leave four to six of the healthiest canes, cutting them back to about eighteen inches. The older the plant, the more canes you should leave. Make clean, sharp cuts just above buds which point outward. Prune climbing roses lightly after they bloom.

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