

## FEBRUARY TO DO LIST

- Please note, most of the information shared here was obtained from Research-based sources (see contributors acknowledgements below), and from individuals who are considered very knowledgeable on a particular subject. While some little tidbits here may be of interest, they should be taken "with-a-grain-of-salt".

*There is a psychological distinction between cutting back and pruning.  
Pruning is supposed to be for the welfare of the tree or shrub;  
Cutting back is for the satisfaction of the cutter. -  
Christopher Lloyd, The Well-Tempered Garden (1973)*

### 1st WEEK:

**Purple Martin** house should be checked & readied 1st/2nd week, depending on the weather and sightings of the martins along the coast. Feb.1 is the average arrival date for older martins at established colony sites. Yearling martins, the age-group that typically colonize new breeding sites, don't begin arriving until 4-6 weeks later, and continue arriving for an additional 10-12 weeks in the south. This means martins can be attracted to new housing through mid-May. No matter where you live, keep your housing open through June. Martins may arrive and begin nesting as late as the end of June, anywhere in North America.

Ten Reasons Why People Fail To Attract Purple Martins: 1) House placed too close to tall trees (no trees taller than the martin house within 40' of it) or in yards that are too enclosed. 2) "Landlord" allows other bird species to claim the house first. 3) House placed too far from human housing. 4) Housing not painted white. 5) Houses opened up too early. \* Landlords should not open their housing to "first-year" birds until about 4 wks. after the "older scouts" have arrived. 6) Failure to open the martin house. \* Open up a few holes for "new families", but you can leave holes covered until "breeding families," return and land on the houses. 7) Vines & shrubs are allowed to grow up under the houses. 8) Housing not built to specifications. 9) Housing attached to wires, or placed too close to wires. 10) Landlords buy or build houses that can't be easily managed. - *PMCA*

It is time to place (repair/ replace) all of your birdhouses. Titmice, chickadees, wrens, woodpeckers, owls and martins soon will be looking for nesting boxes. Also watch out for visiting red-winged blackbirds.

If you didn't do it in Jan., **check pH** in various non-native flower beds (native plants need very little, if any supplements added to soils) and add sulfur or other acidifying supplement. Till composted organic matter and shredded cereal (Elbon) rye into veg. garden soil.

Control chickweed now before it deposits more seed.

Check for SCALE on roses very early this month and spray if needed (see more "In My Rose Garden").

Unless you have a large garden that takes a long time to prune, be patient and wait until mid-month (or end of month) to start cutting back. Sharpen and oil tools ahead of time. If your oaks require pruning, do it now to minimize the threat of oak wilt (be sure to paint cuts and wounds).

Use Gerbera daisies like winter geraniums. They are decorative on the patio and can tolerate cool weather. Cover them for below-freezing spells.

Plant gladiolus now and every 2 or 3 weeks for an extended show of blooms.

Plant your spring crop of broccoli, cabbage cauliflower, carrots and asparagus over the next

month, the earlier the better. For the highest quality broccoli, harvest before the heads begin to bloom. Secondary heads will allow a second harvest several weeks after the large head is cut.

Potatoes, English peas, onions, radishes, sweet peas and pansies can be planted now.

If you find it difficult to handle small seeds for such things as carrots and lettuce, try using seed tapes.

Reapply SLUG and SNAIL bait to pansy, strawberry and primrose beds. - *CF*

This is an excellent time to transplant established trees or shrubs because they are dormant.

Vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers and flowers such as begonias and petunias can be started now from seed. The seedlings will be ready for transplanting in the garden in 6 to 8 weeks. - *EO*

Prune shade trees to restore good shape and remove damaged branches. Do not "top" shade trees.

"Scalp" lawn to remove winter-browned stubble. Drop mower one or two settings. Wear quality respirator, goggles.

Use a water-soluble complete-and-balanced analysis fertilizer to new flower, vegetable transplants, for quickest start.

Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer to feed asparagus beds for vigorous spear development.

Prune fruit trees.

Apply pre-emergent herbicides to prevent crabgrass, sand bur and other summer weeds.

Look for goldfinches starting to get color. - *LR*

Lookout for APHIDS (plant lice) that may develop on new growth of daylilies, photinias, roses (oh, yeah), also on tree trunks. Apply general-purpose insecticide, but target the aphids.

Lookout for SCALE insects on backs of holly leaves, on leaves and stems of euonymus, camellias, photinias, also on bark of shade and fruit trees. Use horticultural oil spray per label directions.

SPIDER MITES attack conifers (junipers, Hill-Country cedars, arborvitae, cypress, pines etc.) earlier than other plants. Look for browned, thinned interior needles. Use *Kelthane* miticide (or a hard blast of cold water every 3 days, 3 times). - *NS*

Hibernation for the Ladybug is ending and breeding begins now. Watch (& wait) for aphid infestation in roses and other plants before applying "Ladybug Lures" or other attractants. - *WBC*

### **In My Rose Garden:**

A. Organic Feeding- (see also Organic Rose Program below) this is an excellent rose practice that we encourage all rose growers to incorporate into their total rose care program for the year. Use the following organic mixture of 10 lbs. alfalfa meal, 10 lbs. cottonseed meal, 10 lbs. fishmeal and 7 1/2 lbs. blood meal; alternatively, the use of "Rose-Glo" (from *Maesto-Gro*), Mills Magic Rose Mix or other similar mix will make your total rose feeding program work so much better. Give each bush 1 or 2 cups spread around the drip line of the bush. You may lightly scratch it into the soil, or just let it work itself into the soil as you carry out your watering program. An important fact to remember about organics is that they help renew our soils by building up the beneficial microorganisms in the soil. This in turn makes the whole feeding program get up and go.

B. Watering- As you plant new roses or transplant old ones, make sure you water plants

adequately. If our weather around here continues to be generous to our gardens with timely rains, our roses will really get up and grow this coming spring. Freshly planted roses, whether in the ground or container, should be kept moist, not soggy.

C. Planting Bareroot and Potted Roses- (Refer to "How To Grow Roses" booklet, pgs. 5-7)

D. Pruning- Spring pruning is much different than our fall bush grooming. It is now that we prune to re-invigorate our rose bushes by cutting out old wood and shaping the bush for the future building of our plants. Generally in this part of South Texas, spring pruning in the rose garden usually commences mid-February on. We usually wait and start the third weekend of the month (Refer to S.A. Rose Society's "How To Grow Roses", pgs. 9-13).

E. Clean Up Spray- When pruning is completed, remove any old foliage left on the bush and give your bushes and rose bed a good clean up spray using 1 Tbsp. of *Funginex* along with *Dithane* or *Manzate* at 2 tsp. per gal. This is also a good time to come in with a general spray of *Malathion* (insecticide), at 2 tsp. per gal. You may combine your fungicide and insecticide materials for this general clean up spray.

\*When using *Malathion*, add 1 Tbsp. of white vinegar per gal. of spray to make it more effective.

F. General Feeding Program- then choose your rose "dessert" from the following:

Either: A. - A soluble feeding using 20-20-20. Mix 2 cups in a 32 gal. garbage can and give each bush 1 gal. poured around the drip line. Give mini's 1 qt. Do this every 2 weeks.

Or: B. - A balanced all-purpose dry (granular) feed such as 12-24-12 or 10-20-10. Use 1-cup spread around the dripline of the bush, just under the mulch (remember we want to feed the soil, the soil feeds the bush). Give mini's 1/3 cup. Do this monthly. \*It doesn't have to "ROSE FOOD" on the bag to feed roses!

Remember to provide adequate amounts of water to get full use of fertilizers applied.

Along with the important manures, compost, etc. that you applied earlier in the winter, WATER makes these materials and fertilizers available to your plants. Be wise in water usage!

**A YEAR IN THE ROSE GARDEN:** by A.J."Pop" Warner

Complete bare-root planting this month.

Complete transplanting by mid-month. Although it can be done much later, it also is much more difficult. You can now prune as you plant.

Do not spray for insects until insects appear. Aphids may soon appear on new growth but they are easily controlled with almost any good insecticide, sprayed just on the new growth. They may even be washed off.

**Organic Rose Program** - by HG

Roses should only be grown organically since they are one of the best medicinal and culinary herbs in the world. When they are loaded with toxic pesticides and other chemicals, that use is gone, or at least should be. Drinking rose hip tea or using rose petals in teas or salads after spraying with synthetic poisons is a really bad idea. For best results with roses, here's the program:

**Selection:** Buy and plant adapted roses such as antiques, David Austin's and well-proven hybrids (see "How To Grow Roses by San Antonio Rose Society", under Selecting Roses For Our Area). The old roses will have the largest and most vitamin C filled hips. R. roses have the most vitamin C.

**Planting:** Prepare beds (1,000 sq.ft.) by mixing the following into existing soil to form a

raised bed: 6" compost,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " lava sand;  $\frac{1}{2}$ " expanded shale,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of decomposed granite, 20lbs. of alfalfa meal, 20lbs. cottonseed meal, 30lbs. of wheat bran/cornmeal/molasses soil amendment, 20lbs. of sul-po-mag. Soak the bare roots or rootball in water with 1 tbsp. of Garrett Juice (or seaweed) per gallon. Settle soil around plants with water - no tamping.

**Mulching:** After planting, cover all the soil in the beds with 1" of compost or earthworm castings followed by 2 - 3" of shredded native cedar. Do not pile the mulch up on the stems of the roses.

**Watering:** If possible, save and use rainwater. If not, add 1 tbsp. of natural apple cider vinegar per gallon of water. If all that fails, just use tap water but don't over water. Avoid salty well water.

**FERTILIZING PROGRAM:** *Round #1 - Feb. 1-15* - organic fertilizer @ 20lbs. /1,000 sq.ft. (i.e. Garden-Ville, GreenSense, Maestro-Gro, Bioform Dry, Sustane or natural meals), lava sand @ 80lbs./1,000 sq.ft., and horticultural cornmeal @ 10-20lbs./1000 sq.ft.

*Round #2 - June 1-15* - organic fertilizer @ 20lbs. /1,000 sq.ft, Texas greensand @ 40lbs./1,000 sq.ft. (soft rock phosphate @ 30lbs./1,000 sq.ft. if in acid soil areas).

*Round #3 - Sept. 15-30* - organic fertilizer @ 20lbs. /1,000 sq.ft, sul-po-mag @ 20lbs. /1,000 sq.ft. (in sandy acid soils use soft rock phosphate instead @ 30lbs./1,000 sq.ft.). Apply wheat/corn/molasses soil amendment at 30lbs. /1,000 sq.ft.

\* Foliar Feed with Garrett Juice twice monthly.

**PEST CONTROL PROGRAM:** Add the following to Garrett Juice (visit his web site to get his recipe or pick it up at a local nursery) and spray as needed.

Garlic tea or mild vinegar- 1/4cup/gal. or label directions for minor insect or disease infestations.

Potassium bicarbonate - 1 rounded tbsp. /gal. for minor diseases.

Liquid biostimulants - Use per label - Medina Soil Activator, or similar product.

Neem or plant oil products - Use per label directions for more serious insect and disease infestations.

For thrips, apply beneficial nematodes to the soil in early spring.

Fish emulsion - 2oz. /gal. for additional nutrients (may not be needed when using compost tea)

**SPRAY SCHEDULE:** 1st spraying at pink bud in the spring. 1st two sprayings should include Garrett Juice and garlic tea (additional sprayings as necessary). For best results spray every two weeks, but at least once a month. When soil is healthy, nothing but Garrett Juice is needed.

Parsley increases roses' fragrance, so plant some around your favorite bushes to enhance their sweet smell of success (garlic used as companion plants help deter fungal problems - *me*). - *JB*

**Rose Care 101: Fungal Diseases** (Neil Sperry's Gardens, Feb. 2002) - In the late 1980's, Dr. R. Kenneth Horst of Cornell University discovered that a simple, homemade spray controlled powdery mildew and black spot on roses as well as or better than any of the chemical fungicides. This spray, now known as the Cornell University formula, consists of two tablespoons of ultra-light horticultural oil and one heaping tablespoon of baking soda thoroughly stirred into one gallon of (warm) water. (If the label on the oil container doesn't mention an emulsifier, then add one tablespoon of a mild dishwashing soap.)

Give your roses (or other plants) a good watering 12 to 24 hours before using this or any spray. Then, with a pump-up sprayer and in the late evening after the roses are in the

shade, spray to wet both sides of all the foliage. Begin your spray regimen immediately after you prune your roses in the late winter, and then continue on an as-needed basis thereafter. But never spray more often than once every two weeks and not at all when daytime temperatures rise above 95 F. \* This formula will coat and smother common insects, such as aphids, cucumber beetles, thrips and scales, along with their little cousins, the two-spotted or red spider mites. (Word of caution, this formula will affect ladybugs, green lacewings and their larvae, so it might be a good idea to thrash or shake loose the good guys before you spray.) - FR

**In Our Herb Garden:** Prepare soil for planting so that it is friable and workable. Till or fork well, adding compost and/or coarse sand for drainage. Gardenville & Fertile Gardens are good sources for compost, soils, and sand. \* Plant seeds of cool season annuals when soil temp. reaches 45 F. These include cilantro, dill, nasturtium, parsley, chervil and onions from transplants. To have a continuing crop of popular dill and cilantro, many S.A. gardeners plant them every several weeks throughout the spring months as hot summer weather causes early maturation. \* Prune and clear debris from mature perennials (examples are Mexican mint marigold, sorrel, chives, or lemon verbena). Frost victims (or sections thereof) should be removed when it is warm enough to recognize evident losses. Beware of removing discouraging looking plants that are simply still dormant. Frostbitten tops can offer some protection; don't prune too soon! Watch for new growth before cutting back dead wood. \* Late in the month divide roots of invasive or overgrown herbs (examples are chives, mints, oregano and yarrow). \* Prune shrub roses after Feb. 14th. Shape overgrown rosemary and sage. - *HERBS: A Resource Guide for San Antonio*

**Native Bulbs** - Each spring the roadsides and prairies across Texas slip into the soft fragrant cloak of native bulbs. Beginning in late February and early March, wild onions spring up and send out their sweet fragrance to attract early nectaring insects and wildflower hunters anxious to see the first blooms of the coming season. Drummond's onion (*Allium drummondii*), Pink nodding onion (*A. cernuum*), both flowering onions are edible, unlike some other native onion-family plants like *Zigadenus nuttallii*, which can be fatal if ingested. A close non-edible relative, false garlic (*Nothoscotum bi-valve*), an early bloomer, sometimes sending forth sweetly scented white blooms during brief winter warm spells. Wild hyacinths (*Camassia scilloides*) make their show in March. Rain lilies (most common, the giant prairie lily *Zephranthes drummondii*) bloom after it rains at any time from spring to fall. Copper lily (*Habranthes tubispathus*) pops up in summer and fall. Southern swamp lily (*Crinum americanum*) will bloom intermittently from July to November (referred to as an aquatic lily, it will do very well in most regularly water landscapes). Spider-lilies (*Hymenocallis lirisome* and *H. caroliniana*) bloom from April through July. - CR

**First The Soil!** by Tom Jones of Territorial Seed Company

Without the garden's soil Foodweb, your plants would not obtain the nutrients for growth. In order for nutrients to become available to plants they must be mineralized by the interaction between the decomposers in the soil and their predators. In one teaspoon of healthy garden soil, the following members of the soil Foodweb can be found.

**BACTERIA:** soil decomposers. Bacteria are responsible for nutrient retention in the soil.

The waste products (poop) that bacterium produce becomes organic matter. The waste can be used by a large number of other soil organisms.

**FUNGAL HYPHAE:** soil decomposers. Works a lot like bacteria does. Gardens require some amount of fungal biomass for greatest productivity.

**PROTOZOA:** feed on bacteria. Protozoa is a single celled organism that produces Nitrogen (N) when it eats bacterium. This N is available to the plants and between 40-80% of the N in all plants come from Protozoa.

**BENEFICIAL NEMATODES:** feed on bacteria, fungi and other nematodes. They also release N, that is available to the plants.

**MICROARTHOPODS:** they have several functions. They chew the plant leaf material, roots and stems into smaller pieces, making it easier for bacteria and fungi to find food they like. They also feed on bacteria and fungi and release Nitrogen (poop).

**EARTHWORMS:** mix plant material into the soil and open air channels. Release Nitrogen (poop) that is then made available to plants.

## **2nd WEEK:**

Red-winged Black birds are visiting the feeders; they will get into just about everything! - *me*

Apply dormant oil to pecan and fruit tree trunks, also hollies, euonymus and other shrubs to control scale, phylloxera and other pests and larvae. Remember to re-apply dormant oil on the roses before buds open.

Perennials planted now will bloom in spring.

Water and fertilized winter annual bedding plants.

Plant nasturtium, cosmos, sweet pea, coreopsis and Mexican poppy seeds.

Plant fruit trees now. They live longer if planted in an 8' x 8' raised bed. - *CF*

Plant carrots and asparagus for spring crops.

Look for goldfinches starting to get color. - *EO*

Prepare beds and gardens for spring planting.

Fertilize pansies with 1/2 lbs. of ammonium sulfate per 100 sq.ft. of bed area. Repeat the application every 4 to 6 weeks.

Browse catalogs and select flower and vegetable varieties now before the rush of spring planting. - *TAE*

Water foliage plants and other containerized plants when needed rather than by the calendar. - *LR*

Spring isn't far away, and this is the time to consider the cool-season annuals that will prosper and bloom in the next 2 to 3 months before summer rolls into town. Each of these annuals will tolerate light frosts and freezes, and each should be available in the South Texas nurseries now and over the next several weeks. \* Pansies and violas (midwinter mainstays); Pinks (related to carnations, second only to pansies in winter hardiness); Snapdragons (massed colors show up best, but commonly sold in mixes); Petunias (early planting gives best results, multiflora "Supertunias", the small-flowering forms laugh at summer heat); English daisies; Calendulas (looks like lush chrysanthemum blooms, use in masses in the back of your floral beds); Larkspur (botanically delphiniums, best and most common is the annual reseeding one. Plant it toward the backs of your beds and let it go to seed); Stocks (snapdragons on steroids, fragrant); Iceland poppies (ultimate in cheerful colors); Sweet alyssum (low border flower, fragrant); Swiss chard (yes, same plant that people eat, ornamental types looks great in the landscape); Bluebonnets (let them go to seed after flowering). - *NS*

\* Thunderstorms in January and February could indicate a light freeze in spring! - *SB*

Pages from the Language of Flowers - Kathleen Gips (Texas Gardener, Jan./Feb. 02). In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, fashionable Victorian ladies used the "language of flowers" to send and receive

messages. Dozens of books were printed, giving details of how to use symbols from Flora's Dictionary to communicate love, hate, sorrow, indifference, fear and a host of other emotions. Here are a few examples gleaned from Flora's Dictionary: the Victorian Language of Herbs and Flowers. - Anemone- *anticipation; expectation* \* Baby's breath- *gentleness; everlasting love* \* Camellia- *"My destiny is in your hands"* \* Daffodil- *chivalry; regard* \* Evening primrose- *inconstancy* \* Fern- *sincerity; fascination* \* Gardenia- *secret untold love; transports of ecstasy* \* Hibiscus- *delicate beauty; consumed by love* \* Iris- *"I have a message for you"; my compliments* \* Jasmine- *"I attach myself to you"* \* King-cup (buttercup)- *desire for riches* \* Lemon verbena- *enchantment; "You have bewitched me"* Myrtle- *passion; love in absence; "Be my love"* \* Nasturtium- *splendor* \* Orange blossom- *woman's worth; bridal festivities* \* Peach- *"Your qualities are unequalled"* \* Queen's rocket- *queen of coquettes; fashion* \* Ranunculus- *"I am dazzled by your charms"* \* Scented geranium- *gentility; preference* \* Tarragon- *unselfish sharing; lasting interest* \* Verbena- *sensibility; enchantment* \* Wisteria- *"Welcome, fair stranger"* \* Yew tree- *sorrow; patience* \* Zinnia- *thoughts of absent friends* . . .

Treat Flowers with TLC- Just as with relationships, a little tender loving care can make fresh flowers last longer. To give Valentine's Day bouquets more staying power, the American Institute of Floral Designers suggests the following:

- A) Wash the vase or container with hot, soapy water and rinse thoroughly with tap water to eliminate bacteria and fungi.
- B) Recut stems of flowers, taking care not to crush woody stems. Cut the flowers under water to prevent air from getting in the stems.
- C) It's best to use water at room temperature. Never use cold water on fresh flowers. Change water daily and use a floral preservative solution.
- D) To revive tired-looking flowers, immerse them entirely in cool water for up to 15 minutes. Or, mist blossoms and leaves for a quick perk-up. If only the flower head is droopy, prick the stem directly under the blossom. That will release trapped air and allow water to be absorbed. (See also NOV2DO list)

There are several different species of fungi, called mycorrhizii, that help plants with different tasks. Many actually form symbiotic relationships with plants. Some mycorrhizii help with water uptake while others make fertilizer more available, etc. To encourage these beneficial fungi in you garden be sure to add lots of organic matter and avoid the use of toxic chemicals. - *TGS*

"**Cedar Season**" for the most part is over (under certain conditions, traces can be found for another couple of weeks). Depending on our "winter" here, we may get first hints of "Ash (Arizona Ash being the first to show up) & Elm" pollen in the air, a sure sign of "spring". - *SB*  
The next couple of weeks will be a good time to do some "spring cleaning" or at least rid the house of dust bunnies, molds and "cedar" pollen. Consider maintaining allergy prevention measures for the rest of the month. - *me*

### **3rd WEEK:**

Spring pruning of your roses can begin (if weather is decent, if not, you can wait till first of March). Look in the S.A. Rose Society's pamphlet "How to Grow Roses", and the article above- "A Year in the Rose Garden" - *me*

Apply pre-emergent weed killers to prevent germination of warm season weeds, grassbur and crabgrass seeds in lawns and landscapes. Follow label instructions.

Geraniums and gerbera daisies make great container plants in late winter. Be prepared to

protect the flowering from late freezes.

Prune fruit trees, crape myrtles and most shrubs now. Wait to trim early bloomers such as Texas mountain laurel, Lady Banksia roses and conifers. - *CF*

Sow marigold and periwinkle seeds in flats or containers for garden planting in spring.

Fertilize blooming pansies with 1/2 lb. of ammonium sulfate per 100 sq.ft. of bed area or with dried bloodmeal. - *EO*

Plant dahlia tubers in late February and early March. - *TAE*

Plant tomatoes in containers now and into March. Varieties good for this area: "Merced, Bingo" and "Celebrity".

Mulch tomatoes and peppers to conserve water and help blooms set. - *LR*

Stubborn weeds? Try *vinegar*! For my safe, natural "Wild Weed Wipeout Tonic", mix 1tbsp. of vinegar (use 9% or higher for around here); 1tbsp. baby shampoo; 1 tbsp. of gin; 1 qt. of warm water. Combine all of these ingredients in a bucket, then pour into a hand held sprayer. Drench the weeds to the point of run-off.

Dandelion Distress! If your yard is over-run dandelions, you can zing hundreds of them at once with help of my "Weed Killer Prep Tonic". Simply mix 1 cup of liquid dish soap; 1 cup of ammonia, and 4 tbsp. of instant tea in a 20 gallon hose-end sprayer, filling the balance of the jar with warm water. Over spray your lawn . . . then apply a broadleaf weed killer labeled for your type of lawn.

Wipe out Crabgrass by preventing the seeds from sprouting in the spring. How? Before you apply a pre-emergent crabgrass control, wash down your turf with my Crabgrass Control Energizer Tonic. Mix 1 cup of hydrogen peroxide, 1 cup of baby shampoo, and 4 tbsp. of instant tea in a 20-gallon hose-end sprayer and saturate the turf. This terrific tonic will jump-start the crabgrass control into action, which will quickly wipe out the problem. - *JB*

#### **4th WEEK:**

Mow/cut Asian Jasmine and feed it with a slow-release lawn food.

Remove winterkilled foliage from Bermudagrass, Zoysia, and Buffalograss lawns. Use clippings as a mulch under shrubs.

Prune peach and plum trees to an open vase shape. Pears and apples should be pruned to a modified central leader. The extension service will supply pruning diagrams (send a stamped, self-addressed envelope, long with the types of fruit trees, to: Pruning Diagrams, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208, S.A., TX., 78213).

For a tough new petunia, try the Junior reseeding variety. It can be planted now in beds and containers.

Columbine and bluebonnet seedlings planted now will bloom this spring.

Control sophora caterpillars on Texas mountain laurel with *Bt* (brand names include Thurcide, Dipel, BioWorm Killer).

Feed shade and fruit trees with one cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter. Spread fertilizer at the drip line, the ring directly beneath the tree's outermost branches. - *CF*

Late February into early March is a good time to plant tomatoes in containers. Suggested varieties include Merced, Bingo and Celebrity.

Mulching tomatoes and peppers will conserve water and help the plants set blooms.

Fertilize cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli.

Apply a light application of fertilizer to established pansy plantings. - *TAE*

Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer to pecans in South Texas late in month. - *NS*



If you find the weather hard to figure out, listen to your body. The old saying when your joints all start to ache, rainy weather is at stake has some truth to it. Joint aches can be caused by a rapid change in atmospheric pressure that usually precedes stormy weather. - TGS

\* In updating this collection of useful tips, I have come across several comments, instructions and chemicals that are being replaced with newer techniques and materials. In some cases, I do not want to change what others have written, but I need to bring "them" up-to-date by putting a "(?)" right behind the point in question and maybe adding my two-cents-worth. - *me*

Many thanks to my contributors for sharing their wisdom so I can learn and share it with you.

*PMCA* - Purple Martin Conservation Association; visit their website at [www.purplemartin.org](http://www.purplemartin.org).

*CF* - Calvin Finch, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

*EO* - Edna Ortiz, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

*LR* - Lynn Rawe, (former) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Cooperative Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News); visit their web site at [www.bexar-tx.tamu.edu](http://www.bexar-tx.tamu.edu).

*CR* - Charlene Rowell, native plant horticulturist (article from Neil Sperry's Gardens mag.

*SB* - Steve Browne, Meteorologist, KSAT; visit their web site at [www.ksat.com/weather](http://www.ksat.com/weather).

*WBC* - courtesy, Wild Bird Center

*HG* - John Howard Garrett, aka. The Dirt Doctor; visit his web site at [www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com).

*TAE* - Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bexar County (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

*NS* - Neil Sperry, Texas horticulturalist, Publisher "Neil Sperry's GARDENS" and contributor to S.A. Express-News; visit his web site at [www.neilsperry.com](http://www.neilsperry.com).

*FR* - Field Roebuck, freelance garden writer and rosarian from Dallas

*JB* - Jerry Baker, America's Master Gardener, aka "The Yardener"

*TGS* - Texas Gardener Seeds, e-newsletter from Texas Gardener Magazine; visit their web site @ [www.texasgardener.com](http://www.texasgardener.com)

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