

Gardening Almanac for the Plateau

February

Weather Average Rainfall and Temperatures:

The average rainfall for February is 5.01 inches. The average maximum temperature is 48 degrees F. and the minimum is 27 degrees F.

Activities Among the newer gardening trends is planting more drought-resistant plants, given the recent years of drought. Also, try using more succulents, especially in rocky, dry areas.

It's time to prune fruit trees and all dormant bushes and ornamental grasses. Prune hydrangeas during the last week of the month. After pruning, dispose of clippings to prevent disease or insect spread. Leave the trimming of flowering bushes until they have bloomed out. Force spring-blooming shrubs to bloom indoors by cutting stems when buds begin to swell. Place the cuttings in water indoors in a sunny window. Warmer temperatures will stimulate blooming. This works well for forsythia, flowering quince, pussy willow or fruit trees.

Plant cold weather annuals like nasturtiums, pansies, violas, snapdragons, English daisies, sweet William, gazanias and calendulas.

Fertilize trees, shrubs and evergreens from mid to late February. Use an acid-type fertilizer to feed evergreens, conifers, and broad leaf evergreens. Use an all-purpose fertilizer to feed roses and other deciduous trees and shrubs. If you use dry fertilizers, be sure to water thoroughly.

Prune and shape deciduous vines such as honeysuckle.

Divide and move most perennials. This can be done until they begin to show new growth.

If you plan to grow your own annuals, such as ageratum, verbena, petunia, vinca or other slow-growing plants, start the seeds indoors this month.

Plant rhubarb, horseradish, asparagus and artichokes.

Start cold-weather vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, onion sets, English peas, kale, carrots, collards, beets, radishes, kohlrabi and Chinese cabbage in cold frames.

Start herb seeds indoors.

Till the vegetable garden (if weather permits). This allows the weather to help you break up the dirt clods. Compost from last year can be tilled in at this time.

Are there deer in your neighborhood? Plants they tend to avoid are: ageratum, snapdragons, basil, rosemary, coleus, daffodils, hyacinths, Christmas fern, lily of the valley, vinca minor, ornamental grasses (except that sometimes they bed down in them), boxwoods, barberry (except for golden barberry which they especially like), mahonia, pieris, buddleia, Chinese hollies, large junipers and trees including American holly and blue spruce.

Comfortable weather-resistant outdoor garden furniture has taken great strides, allowing homeowners a chance to spend more time outside where they can enjoy their gardens, and this is a good thing.

Remember the birds – suet is important to keep their little bodies warm, and seed is also important when they can't find anything to eat through the snow. Besides that, they are fun to watch.

Wildlife: Some birds, depending on the temperatures, will begin to look for nesting sites. This is a good time to look for information on birdhouses. Wrens and finches tend to look for smaller opening houses than other birds that nest in our area. Keep binoculars near your windows and find a good bird identification book. Put up new birdhouses and clean old nests out of the ones left from last year. If squirrels have enlarged the holes and taken over, it is best to throw the house away, or craft a new hole in a block of wood and superimpose it over the old hole. Change the location of houses if you haven't been attracting the birds you wish, until you find by trial and error the best places. Birds you may see in February are:

Red-bellied woodpecker, Red-headed woodpecker, Hairy woodpecker, Downy woodpecker, Pileated woodpecker, Ruddy duck, Muscovy duck, Mallard duck, Bufflehead, Canada goose, American goldfinch, Song sparrow, Carolina wren, Tufted titmouse, Northern junco, White-breasted nuthatch, Mourning dove, Carolina chickadee, Eastern bluebird, Red-tailed hawk, Sharp-shinned hawk, American crow, Purple finch, Northern mockingbird, Rusty blackbird, Northern cardinal, American robin, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) warbler, Sandhill crane migrating, Cedar waxwing, Pine siskin, American bald eagle, Blue jay, Starling, Meadow lark, Rufous-sided towhee, White-throated sparrow, Red-winged blackbird, Grackle, Turkey vulture, Fox sparrow, Cowbird, and Field sparrow.

Plants: Daffodils, Lenten Roses and Primroses will be in bloom this month.

This information has been created by the Cumberland County Master Gardeners Association, Crossville TN