

THINGS TO DO LIST FOR FEBRUARY 2019

PRUNING – Prune during a waxing moon to encourage growth. During a waning moon, it discourages growth. Each plant has its own optimal trim time (Farmer's Almanac). Good rule of thumb, prune after flowering or fruiting. Deadhead flowers to encourage new blooms. Cut back wild, diseased, crossed and dead branches. Overgrown plants should be pruned back gradually. Try planting some of the cuttings at the base of each plant you cut back. Cut the tops off of ferns, grasses, canna lilies and dead heliconias. Do not cut back plants that bloom in the spring. The summer bloomers should be ok. Plants that bloom all the time, like shrimp plants, should be trimmed in the summer. Crape myrtle seed pods can be cut off now. Trim trees to improve their form.

PLANTING – Plant flowers, herbs, and vegetables that bear crops above ground from the day the moon is new until the day it is full. Plant flowering bulbs, biennial and perennial flowers, and vegetables that bear crops below ground from the day after the moon is full to the day before it is new (Farmer's Almanac). Begonias, caladiums, impatiens, pentas and geraniums can be planted now. For planting vegetables, see the IFAS Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide.

WATERING – Pentas do not require a lot of water. Turn off automatic watering systems and only water when the plants show signs of wilting. Water your yard well on the day before a cold front passes through, or turn it on the afternoon before. Watering will trap ground heat and make sure the plants have sufficient water to withstand the drying cold winds. Check sprinkler heads for clogging. Test with your finger each potted plant for moisture before watering.

BLOOMING – Orchids in bloom include phalaenopsis, nun's orchids, oncidiums and cattleyas. Some fruit trees in bloom are citrus, avocado, mulberry, mango, papaya and banana. Other bloomers are flame vine, begonia, bromeliad, cassia, bougainvillea, ixora, kalanchoe, pentas, geranium, impatiens, angel trumpet, blue daze, pansy, crown of thorns, ginger, desert rose, heliconia, hibiscus, firespike, salvia, scarlet red cloak, crinum lily, chenille, gaillardia, lantana, marigold, milkweed, Panama rose, periwinkle, petunia, blue and white plumbago, shrimp, thryallis, white bird of paradise, canna, rose, amazon lily and blackberry lily.

INSECTS – Monitor the garden for insects and diseases every day. Ants and snails are in my garden now. Sprinkle bait lightly to kill them. Scale is returning on crotons. Bayer drench has been suggested to me. I use a high powered hose to spray plants and wipe them off with my hands. Saturating plants with several drops of Ivory soap in a spray bottle also helps. Safer Soap or horticultural oil works too. Or cut off and throw away the parts of the croton with the scale. To identify them, go to the IFAS Insect ID Lab.

PLANT ADVICE – It is time to plan new garden projects: a sitting area, a path preferably of 24" X 24" stepping stones, a compost area, fence, pergola, bbq area, or patio. Replace your lawn grass when you can with drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plants and groundcovers. Feed your lawn the day after a heavy rain, not when it needs water. Be sure the grass is dry before applying fertilizer, and water after. Fertilize at the end of this month if you didn't in January. Buy fertilizer NOW. Sometimes it is hard to find. Some plants are dropping their leaves because of the cold spell we just had. Leave them alone. They will come back.

Susan Berry, President of the Hollywood Garden Club, Master Gardener, Advanced Master Naturalist, Certified Gardening Consultant and Landscape Designer, FFGC Earth Steward and FMNP Land Steward.

<http://hollywoodgardenclub.com>