

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

"Should you shield the canyons from the windstorms, you would not see the beauty of their carvings." Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

January blessed us with several days of sunny weather that piqued our garden instincts reminding us that we must endure the rain if we want to witness the rainbow. My readers in Norway and Alaska write me that they envy our mild Lamorinda winters and wonder why we whine so much over so little. Yes, we are spoiled and I am grateful to live amidst our rolling hills in an area where just about everything grows and the sun shines often. As dreary as February may seem, there is work-a-plenty in the garden. Grab a warm hat, put on your gloves and mud boots, and get outside for energizing exercise. Look on the bright side ... at least we are not shoveling snow!

- **DAYDREAM** about spring by perusing seed catalogs circling your favorite edibles and ornamentals.
- **PLAN** your garden by pinning on Pinterest. Find the newest gerbera, begonia, or celosia to share with friends.
- **ENROLL** in a gardening class at our local community centers.
- **ADD** passion to your parlor with a bouquet of radiant roses from your local florist.
- **PLANT** mophead hydrangeas in moist, well-drained soil in a shady location. Add soil sulfur to make soil more acidic to produce blue flowers, add lime (alkaline) if you want pink flowers.
- **BUY** amaryllis bulbs on sale now. Arrange three in a large container for a spectacular display next year.
- **KEEP** Valentine bouquets fresher longer by removing all lower leaves from stems and adding a drop of bleach to the water.
- **SPARK** your children's interest in gardening by giving them seed packets of radishes, peas, and beans to start indoors. Get your school on board too!
- **LAST** chance to prune roses, crepe myrtle, butterfly bush, wisteria, and fruit trees before buds break.
- **GET** your blueberry bushes planted in February for bushels of antioxidant fruit next year.
- **WASH** the leaves of your houseplants with a damp cloth. For fuzzy leaves like African violets, stroke the top with a soft hairbrush to remove dust and grime.
- **SOW** hardy color spots of pansies, cyclamen, and primroses to liven up the scene. Contrary to popular belief, these plants are perennials in our area so do not pull them out after blooming. Cut back and plant around them to be rewarded with blooms next winter.
- **START** sweet peas indoors to get a head start on fragrance and beauty.
- **ORGANIZE** your garden shed, shelf, or garage this month in anticipation of a busy season to come.
- **SHARPEN** and clean your tools now. Make any repairs or replacements before spring springs.
- **DIVIDE** bulbs such as snowdrops and plant in other desired areas.
- **CUT** back deciduous grasses.
- **FILL** your bird feeders and bird baths weekly to keep our feathered friends in your garden during the cold season.
- **READ** your garden journal from last February and make note of any changes. Make sure to continue taking photographs.
- **COVER** birds of paradise and other frost tender plants with sheets or blankets.
- **COOK** a hearty winter soup with your harvest of cabbage, kale, Swiss chard, and spinach.
- **PERFUME** your outdoor spaces by including the skyrocketing popularity of fragrant specimens such as dianthus, gardenia, nicotiana, phlox, hyacinth, lilac, iris, and of course, roses.

Be optimistic. There is no failure in the garden. Everything is fertilizer. Love is in the air. Spring is around the bend. Enjoy a warm, heartfelt Valentine's Day.

Happy gardening to you!

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Cynthia is available as a speaker and consultant.





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Why Not to Top

Shade trees should **never** be topped. The regrowth of a topped tree is structurally unsound. Topping required by utility right-of-way pruning is bluntly obvious and sets an unfortunate community standard followed by others. Instead of topping, use crown *cleaning*, *thinning*, and/or *proper reduction* methods, set by the ISA.

So don't wait until it's too late, call your local ISA certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to help you with your pruning questions.

Advance Tree Service
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