

## The February Garden

by Teresa Gaffner

February is here and it's finally time to move those pen and paper garden plans into action. There are plenty of hands-on planning, prepping and maintenance tasks to get done this month. You can start by tilling your vegetable garden beds and adding compost. Prune your grapes, brambles and blueberry bushes now. As always, weed out your flower and other garden beds on a regular basis so they do not get out of control and become overwhelming.

Check your raised beds for any needed repairs and plan your watering system. Raised bed gardens may also benefit from the addition of compost. A rich, well-draining soil mixture no less than 6 inches deep works well. One combination recommended by is equal parts of composted manure, plant compost and bagged garden soil.

**<https://site.extension.uga.edu/colquitthomeowners/2022/02/prepare-for-your-spring-vegetable-garden-now/>** Then top the soil with a light layer of mulch to suppress any rogue weeds. **<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g6985>** More information about raised bed gardening is available at: **<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-E.pdf>**.

Now is also the time to sow seeds to get a good start on your gardens. Unpredictable weather is a hallmark of eastern Tennessee this month, so sowing seeds indoors or using hoop houses and low poly tunnels outside are prudent choices to protect your seedlings. The first week of February is the right time to be sowing seeds indoors for cool season crops such as broccoli, collard greens, eggplant, kale and kohlrabi. They should be ready to plant at the end of March or the beginning of April. Warm season plants can be started from seed inside during the last week of February. Here is a link to a West Virginia University publication on hoops and poly tunnels with a list of cool season vegetable varieties. **<https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/gardening-101/low-tunnels-for-beginners>**

According to the 2023 University of Tennessee (UT) Extension Home Fruit and Vegetable Garden Calendar, February is the month for prepping your fruit trees and beds. Preparation, proper pruning, and maintenance are the keys for a successful fruit garden. Here is an internet site for learning more about pruning: **<https://extension.psu.edu/fruit-tree-pruning-basic-principles>**. Check out the link for the calendar for a list of tasks that will help you make the right choices for your garden. **<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/w436.pdf>**

If you would like to try your hand at grafting your own fruit trees, register at the annual grafting course given by UT Extension Agent Chris Ramsey at the Ron Ramsey Agriculture (Ag) Center. Everything you need to learn this skill is provided and all are welcome, from the experienced grafter to the beginner with no experience. The Grafting Class will be held on Thursday, March 16, 2023 at the Ron Ramsey Ag Center located at 140 Spurgeon Lane, Blountville, TN 37617.

There will be a variety of scion wood (a woody twig cut from a variety of fruit tree that you want to grow that will be grafted on to rootstock) already available, but rootstock has to be ordered and a minimum order of 7 is required. Grafting knives will be provided to use during class.

Please call the Ag center at (423) 574 1898 to receive an order form and a list of rootstock available.

As you can see, February is a busy time, inside and outdoors, for gardeners. Let's get ready to welcome Spring and grow something!

**How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*