

Planning for the 2025 Growing Season (published 2025_02_15)
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If the warm sunny days have led you to want to be outside and start growing your plants --- HOLD ON. The weather is still uncertain and deceiving, going from freezing weather to sunny 67-degree days, but February is a great month to plan and research. Planning your work so you can work your plan will lead you to success. This is a brief list of to-dos for the month of February.

Build your garden's foundation

If you have journaled your garden's progress, review your notes. The "Ask-A-Master-Gardener" forum in this newspaper published an article on journaling last year and it has great advice. See "Garden Journals" at <https://www.netmga.net/ask-a-master-gardener/gardening-general-info/>.

Take a soil sample for testing if not done in the last three to five years. This is a good way to determine the amendments needed to grow a viable, productive garden. Visit your local extension agency for more information. This link will take you to the Extension Offices in Northeast Tennessee. <https://www.netmga.net/ut-county-extension-offices-in-ne-tn/>. There is also an article on "Soil Testing" at <https://www.netmga.net/ask-a-master-gardener/soil-fertilizer-compost-mulch/>.

Plan the rotation of crops and design your beds. Be sure to follow guidelines for planting. It is important to know the spacing and depth the seeds should be planted. Adam Watson, Extension Agent for Washington County, TN, has developed a short YouTube presentation on reading seed packets. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/7anleXTaC8s>

Put down mulch to control weeds. If you are using black plastic for mulching it is very hard to get water to the plant. There are several ways to irrigate your plants by placing the irrigation system under black plastic. Dr. Natalie Bumgarner, Associate Professor of Plant Sciences, UT, has developed a YouTube video demonstrating an easy system for home growers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpTv4r3CfCc&list=PL1yNe3Yb9E36R31MDvkonfW8oCuMI2Dbr&index=5>

Inspect Your Plants

Inspect your plants for any winter damage. Prune dormant plants as necessary. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after bloom. Washington County Extension Agent, Adam Watson, has developed an educational YouTube Video for pruning fruit trees. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-IEyjrjvjkc>

Another good source on pruning is at "What to Prune Now in the Garden". <https://wayne.ces.ncsu.edu/2021/02/what-to-prune-now-in-the-garden/>

Also from Wayne County, NC is this advice about roses: "Rose pruning should be done as leaf buds begin to swell, usually late February into early March. Prune shrub roses (knock-out roses) back to 3 to 5 finger-sized canes 18 to 24 inches long." <https://wayne.ces.ncsu.edu/2025/02/february-gardening-tips/>

Newly planted trees, shrubs, evergreens, and perennials may need to be watered if the soil is dry and not frozen.

Watch for the opportunity to divide and replant crowded perennials as the season goes along.

Inspect your plants for scale. Apply dormant oil for control of scale and mites. This can be used PRIOR to plants beginning their spring growth.

Cut back ornamental grasses now. Cut short grasses to 4 to 6 inches. For tall grass cut to a 6-to-12-inch height. Avoid cutting any new growth. Wear gloves when cutting pampas grass. Use a rope to pull back the top of tall grasses to make cutting easier.

How about propagating some plants? You can take hardwood cuttings from shrubs, such as Crape myrtles and viburnum.

<https://wayne.ces.ncsu.edu/2024/02/february-gardening-tips/>

Plan your spring planting

Clean up leaves, dead plants and debris from your beds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FfY43AUZ5E&list=PL1yNe3Yb9E36R31MDvkonfW8oCuMI2Dbr&index=6>

Incorporate compost and manure to improve your soil.

Determine seeds you need or want to order. UT Hort has great videos on starting seeds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNJLoF1uiAo&list=PL1yNe3Yb9E36R31MDvkonfW8oCuMI2Dbr&index=1>

Test seeds you may have left from last year for viability. It is easy to do by wrapping the seeds in a damp paper towel, placing in a plastic bag and waiting the appropriate amount of time per the seed packet. If the seeds sprout you are ready to plant. For more information see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frRJZcyCIH4&list=PL1yNe3Yb9E36R31MDvkonfW8oCuMI2Dbr&index=7>. Also see “Seed Viability and Germination” at https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/infosheet_seed_viability.pdf.

For additional help throughout the year, The University of Tennessee publishes a calendar each year that lists garden tasks. You can find the 2025 calendar at: <https://uthort.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/228/2025/01/2025-TN-Fruit-and-Veggie-CalendarE.pdf>.

There are so many resources available on gardening. Be sure to look for reputable information from a **.edu, .gov, .org, and .net site** as long as nothing is being sold on the site. The information published on these sites are more likely to be research based and reliable.

Good luck with your 2025 gardening. Remember to plan your work so you can enjoy your garden!

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IklH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

Or Washington County's YouTube site:
<https://www.youtube.com/@utextensionwashingtoncounty>

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. 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.