



Gardening Tips

Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and other cool season vegetable transplants can be planted right now. Check for availability at your garden centers and farmer's co-ops this month. Early-bird gardeners try to get their cabbage, collard, and broccoli plants out as soon as possible. English peas, spinach, head lettuce, beets, radishes, and mustard can be seeded late in February. Sometimes they make it, and sometimes they don't. It all depends on our capricious early spring weather that can be typified by a 40-degree drop in temperature in just a few hours.



Irish potatoes and onion sets or transplants can be put in the ground now. When planting seed potatoes be sure that each chunk of potato you cut from the seed potato has a least one eye or bud from which the stem of the plant will grow. For you novice gardeners, the eye should be looking up when planted so the potato can see which way to go! Remember the book entitled Don't Bend over in the Garden Granny, You Know Them Taters Got Eyes by Southern humorist Lewis Grizzard? Think about that the next time you're bent over digging taters!



One limiting factor for early spring planting other than our yo-yo weather is when the

soil will be dry enough to till. One way to get around this is to grow your cool season vegetables in raised beds. These beds will be workable and ready to plant before beds prepared at existing ground level.



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The European Starling

The European Starling was first introduced to North America by a group of literature enthusiasts who wanted America to have all of the birds mentioned in the plays of William Shakespeare. One hundred birds were released in New York's Central Park in the 1890s. Today, there are more than two hundred million European Starlings in North America, ranging from Alaska to Mexico. Starlings are often considered pests, particularly for livestock facilities.

Starlings are approximately the same size as blackbirds, but have short tails and long slender beaks. Their name is taken from their appearance in flight, with their short pointed wings giving them the appearance of a four-pointed star. At a distance, starlings appear black. However, in spring they have a purple-green iridescence, and in the fall and winter they are brown with bright white spots. White spots on starlings are a result of white tips on new feathers grown in the fall. By spring, these tips have worn away. This type of color changing is called a "wear molt".

Starlings are commonly found in urban areas and in the countryside. They feed on the ground in lawns, fields, sidewalks, and parking lots. Starlings will consume a variety of foods, ranging from fruits and seeds of wild and cultivated plants to insects like caterpillars and lawn grubs. They will also eat livestock feed and items found in garbage, especially during winter.

They frequently travel in large groups, often with blackbirds and grackles. They will often perch and roost on wires, trees, and buildings. Starlings are strong fliers than can get up to speeds of 48 miles per hour. Large flocks of starlings are often seen moving in elaborate patterns. These occur as the individual birds move to put themselves in a position within the flock protected from predators.

Starlings are very vocal and can make a constant stream of rattles and whistles. They are also accomplished mimics, and can learn the calls of as many as twenty other species. Males make whistling songs lasting a few seconds directed at other males, as well as warbling songs lasting more than a minute directed at females. Females also sing, particularly during the fall. Starling songs often incorporate the calls of other birds such as meadowlarks, Northern Bobwhites, and cowbirds.



Garden Calendar: February



Planning

- Decide on plants you would like to have in your spring garden and flower beds.
- Consider buying new plants that you have not tried before.
- Determine how many seed packets you need. Remember to order extra seed if you are planning to replant for a second crop of flowers after the heat of the summer.

Planting

- Plant cold weather annuals: Nasturtiums, Pansies, Snapdragons, English Daisies, Sweet William, and Calendulas
- Start cold weather vegetables in cold frame: Broccoli, Cauliflower, Onion sets, English Peas, Kale, Carrots, Collards, Beets, Radishes, Kohlrabi, and Chinese Cabbage.
- Plant Asparagus in prepared beds.
- Start seeds of Herbs indoors for transplant outdoors.
- February is an ideal time to set out Dogwoods. Planting site should be well drained and plants should be planted shallowly. Dogwoods prefer acidic soil.
- Broad-leaved Evergreens such as Magnolia, Holly, and Photinia can be set out at this time.
- Plant new Roses, or move old Roses soon after February 15.

Fertilizing

- Roses -- Apply top-dressing of organic fertilizer under thick layer of compost or rotted manure.
- Fertilize Trees and Shrubs (not spring Flowering Shrubs) if not fertilized in January.

Pest Control

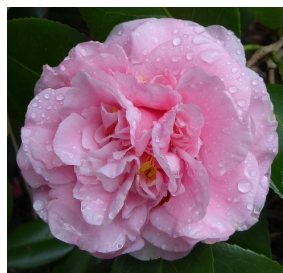
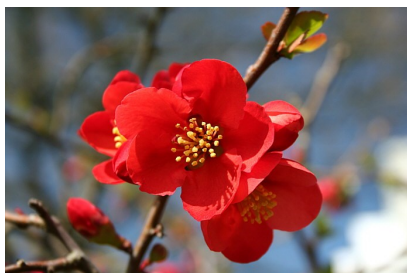
- Spray garden with dormant spray. This will kill many eggs and spores of insects and diseases. Do not apply if temperatures will dip below freezing within 4 hours of application.

Pruning

- Prune Evergreens for size and shape. Cut out dead wood of Flowering Shrubs. Dispose of clippings to prevent disease or insect spread.
- Prune Hydrangeas during the last week in the month.

In Bloom

- Crocus, early Daffodils, Helleborus, Hyacinth, Pansies, Scilla, Snowdrop, Snowflake, Violet, Camellia, Forsythia, Flowering Quince, Loropetalum, Pussy Willow, Thumbergia Spirea, and Winter Jasmine.





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Two Spotted Spider Mites

The twospotted spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*) is a common pest of indoor plants. Infestations most often enter the house when plants are moved from outdoors or when new plants are purchased. Spider mites may crawl from plant to plant or be moved by air currents.



Spider mites feed on plants by inserting a stylet-like mouthpart and sucking plant sap. Their feeding produces small wounds which appear as white flecks. At the outset of infestation, these injuries are localized in small patches on the underside of the leaf near the base of leaf veins. As damage progresses, leaves may have a generalized “off” color that appears as a graying or bronzing. In severe infestations, spider mites make webbing which is very visible. Heavily infested leaves may also drop prematurely.



Under ideal conditions, spider mites may complete their life cycle in as little as two weeks. This allows for very rapid population increases. Spider mite females may lay as many as five eggs a day. Eggs hatch within two days and immature mites feed in the same fashion as adults.

Control of spider mites can be very difficult. When possible, heavily infested plants should be disposed of as they serve as a source of new infestations. Spider mite problems often develop when plants are under stress, so good plant care is important in controlling this pest. Small plants can be washed repeatedly with a jet of water to reduce population levels. Neem oil is the most effective spray product for control of spider mites. Biological control with predatory mites is also a possibility for large indoor plantings or greenhouses.





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Gardening for Beginners

Gardening means different things to different people. Thousands view gardening as a hobby, a relaxing escape from the pressures of an urban environment. For these people, the food produced may be almost secondary. Growing fresh vegetables, herbs, or fruits provides a great sense of joy and accomplishment. A vegetable garden can also reduce the family's food budget, and it can be a source of hard-to-find vegetables such as kohlrabi, Chinese cabbage, horseradish, salsify, and pak choi. One of the main reasons that people garden is that vegetables from the supermarket cannot compare in taste, quality, or freshness with vegetables grown in the home garden.



The vegetable garden has traditionally been located in an area separate from other parts of the landscape, because it was considered unsightly. With proper planning, however, the garden can be both functional and attractive. Landscape designers today often incorporate the home landscape and ornamental plants such as flowering annuals into the vegetable garden. This gardening philosophy, coupled with our favorable climate, can offer gardening opportunities nearly all year long.

If you are a beginning gardener with an average-sized family, you will not need a lot of space for a vegetable garden. An area 25 feet square should be adequate. Be careful not to start with too large a space; it is easy to "bite off more than you can chew." Regardless of size, there are factors to consider in selecting a garden site. The first is sunlight. All vegetables need some sunlight. The garden should receive at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day. Eight to 10 hours each day is ideal. Vegetables should therefore be planted away from the shade of buildings, trees, and shrubs. Some leafy vegetables such as broccoli, collards, spinach, and lettuce tolerate shadier conditions than other vegetables, but if your garden does not receive at least 6 hours of sunlight daily, you will not be successful growing vegetables.

The second consideration is distance from the house. The closer the vegetable garden and the easier it is to reach, the more you will probably use it. You will be likely to harvest vegetables at their peaks and thus take maximum advantages of garden freshness. It is also more likely that you will keep up with jobs such as weeding, watering, insect and disease control, and succession planting if the garden is close by.

The third consideration is soil. You do not need to have the ideal type of soil to grow a good garden. If possible the soil should be fertile and easy to till, with just the right texture -- a loose, well-drained loam. Avoid any soil that remains soggy after a rain. Heavy clay and sandy soils can be improved by adding organic matter. Of course, gardening will be easier if you start with a naturally rich soil.

The fourth consideration is water. Including rain and irrigation, the garden needs at least 1 inch of water per week. Therefore, it is essential to locate the garden near a spigot or some other water source.

The fifth & last consideration is good air drainage. Avoid locating the garden in a low spot such as the base of a hill or the foot of a slope bordered by a solid fence. These areas are slow to warm in the spring, and frost forms more readily in them because cold air cannot drain away. Vegetable gardens located on high ground are more likely to escape light freezes, permitting an earlier start in the spring and a longer harvest in the fall.

27th Annual

Landscape Symposium

April 23, 2022

The Venue at 7L Farms
853 Oil Well Road
Wiggins, MS 39577

Program 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

Topics Include:

Bonsai

Trees in the Home Landscape

Seed Starting and Propagation

Floral Design

Registration is \$10.00
(Lunch Included)

There will be a Vegetable and Plant Sale, A Raffle and Door Prizes

For more information
Call (601) 928-5286

Sponsored by:
Mississippi State University Extension Service
Stone County Master Gardeners

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2022 Online Master Gardener Training

The Mississippi State University Extension Service is offering the Master Gardener training and certification online again this year. Participants take 40 hours of instruction in consumer horticulture and related topics to become expert volunteers.

Learn more and register for the first Master Gardener class of 2022 from Feb. 1-28 at <http://msuext.ms/mg>. Instruction for all classes is online and self-paced. The online class material is offered from March 15 to May 15.

“The Master Gardener program grooms active volunteers who exchange the 40 hours of educational training they receive for 40 hours of volunteer service within one year of their training,” said Jeff Wilson, Extension horticulture specialist and state coordinator of the Master Gardener program.

“These Master Gardeners continue to be assets to their communities as, in future years, they continue to receive training and log a minimum of 20 community service hours a year to maintain their certified status,” he said.

The volunteer work of Master Gardeners helps local Extension offices reach a broader audience than is possible through just the efforts of Extension agents. Volunteers take on a variety of community beautification projects and extend the educational arm of the university to the public by providing horticultural information based on university research and recommendations.

“Master Gardener volunteers experience the personal satisfaction of serving their community, gaining horticultural expertise and connecting with their local gardening community,” Wilson said.

The cost for Master Gardener training is \$125 for those who want to become certified volunteers and provide 40 hours of service.

For \$200, the same material is available for those not interested in the volunteer service component. A third option is to pay \$25 per class for select classes. These classes are available year-round and do not require volunteering.

MSU is an equal opportunity institution. For disability accommodation or questions about the Master Gardener program, contact Jeff Wilson at 662-566-8019 or jeff.wilson@msstate.edu.

Online Private Applicator Certification Program

A private applicator is a certified applicator who uses or supervises the use of restricted-use pesticides to produce an agricultural commodity on his or her own land, leased land, or rented land or on the lands of his or her employer. Private applicators must be at least 18 years old.

In response to limited face-to-face training during the COVID-19 situation, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Plant Industry has approved an online private applicator certification program developed by the MSU Extension Service. Persons needing to obtain or renew their private applicator certification can complete the online training (two video training modules and a competency exam) by using the following link: <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/online-private-applicator-certification-program>. The fee for training and testing is \$20, payable online by credit card, debit card, or eCheck.

SIGN UP FOR THE

MASTER GARDENER

ONLINE training

SELF-PACED AND COMPLETELY ONLINE!

Register online at msuext.ms/mg from February 1-28.

1. Master Gardener Course, MG volunteer option: **\$125**
2. Home Gardening Course, non-MG-volunteer option: **\$200**
3. Individual classes*: **\$25 per class**
*available year-round

Courses open on **March 15** and must be completed by **May 15**.



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Private Applicator

TRAINING AND TESTING ONLINE

Watch the training modules, pass the exam, and receive your private applicator certification from MDAC Bureau of Plant Industry.

\$20 COST

Visit <http://msuext.ms/agmes> or contact your local MSU Extension office for info on how to register.



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In-Person Master Gardener Training Offered in Hancock County



An in-person Master Gardener Training will be offered at the MSU Extension office in Hancock County, located at 17304 Highway 603, Kiln, MS. Classes will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning on March 15th and concluding on April 14th. Course fees for this in-person training are the same as for the online program. If you would like to participate in this in-person Master Gardener training, please contact Dr.

Christian Stephenson at C.Stephenson@msstate.edu or by phone at 228-467-5456.

