



Crape Myrtles

It is too early to prune them.

Freeze Protection

Coldest days usually occur this month. Keep those frost covers handy.

1. A day or two before a hard freeze is predicted water your yard during your allotted irrigation day.
2. Take moveable potted plants into the garage or inside your home. Alternatively, you can group them snugly together close to the house. Water and cover them with a fibrous material (see below)
3. Cover with fibrous material (see below) in ground tropical plants and those potted plants that are too large or heavy to move:
 - Cover them to a practical height. It is much better to save as much of the bottom of the plant.
 - With the return of warm weather they should sprout new growth from the protected portion, and you can then prune away the frost damaged areas.
4. Use fibrous material (i.e. containing small pores) to cover plants.
 - Good candidates are frost-cloth, light canvas tarps, blankets, towels, bed sheets, and corrugated boxes. These keep the cold off the plants, and allow them to breathe at the same time. If left on as the day warms up, it will not roast the plants.
 - Do Not Cover Plants Directly With Any Type of Plastic.
It is non-porous, trapping the moisture-laden cold air onto their branches, leaves, stems and flowers -- freezing them. If left on as the day warms up, it acts as an oven trapping the heat and roasting the plants.
5. Create an instant mini-greenhouse, where needed:



- Place work light outfitted with an incandescent 60 watt bulb on the ground, and then cover the plant with fibrous material (see above). **Note:** Do not let a bare light bulb touch the ground. Do not use halogen lights -- they're too hot. Do not use CFL or LED bulbs – they emit very little heat.
- Or wrap incandescent Christmas lights around your plants, and then cover them with fibrous material (see above). For low plants, just wind the light strand through the plants on the ground, and then cover with fibrous material. **Note:** Make sure the light strands you use are in good working condition, and waterproof. Do not use LED lights – they emit very little heat.

Winter Drought Protection

- ♥ Deeply water shrubs and young trees once per week.
- ♥ Deeply water mature trees every 2 weeks.
- ♥ Irrigate the lawn once per week. Grass roots need a drink to remain healthy. To see whether your lawn is receiving enough water, use the screwdriver test. Stick a long flat-head screwdriver into the soil. If it easily penetrates, then the lawn is receiving enough moisture.

Roses

- ♥ Prune your hybrid tea roses! Valentine's Day is the traditional time. Afterwards, keep an eye out for die-back (canes turning brown or black at the cut end). If you find one, prune the cane again to a healthy eye bud. If there are none, completely cut off the cane.
- ♥ Antique roses usually don't need pruning. A good rule of thumb is to remove all dead canes and clip back no more than 1/3 of the remaining bush - encouraging full foliage and heavy bloom without destroying the vigor and natural attractive form of the plant.



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- 🪴 Ever blooming roses can be tip-pruned several times a year since they flower on new growth.
- ✂ Don't prune climbing roses until after their first flush of blooms. Many flower on canes that have hardened over a winter, so early spring pruning will reduce the display of flowers.
- ✂ Do not feed newly planted or transplanted roses until after their first display of blooms.
- 🪴 Apply a fist full (1/3 - 1/4 cup) of Epsom salts around each bush. This adds magnesium to the soil and is said to encourage strong branching.
- 🪴 Apply 2 - 4 inches of mulch around each rose bush. They will be happier when the heat arrives.

Annuals

- 🌸 Plant any of these for spring color: Cyclamen, African Daisy, Dianthus, English Daisies, Foxglove, Geraniums, Hollyhock, Larkspur, Nemesis, Petunias, Poppies, Primrose, Snapdragons, Stock, Sweet Alyssum, Violas, and Wallflower.
- 🌸 Butterflies are starting to migrate. Feed them by planting Dianthus, Petunias, Snapdragons and Sweet Alyssum. All are good butterfly nectar plants.
- 🌸 Try Fuchsia - they love this cool weather. Plus they'll attract hummingbirds that will be making a short visit in late this month/early next month.
- 🌸 Write in your garden journal which season color plants did well this winter and which did not so you will know what to plant later in fall.

Exotics and Tropicals

- ✂ Do not fertilize tropicals such as Hibiscus, Plumerias, and etc.
- ✂ Wait until next month to transplant tropical plants like Ginger and Angel's Trumpet.

Fruits

- 🍷 Feed berry bushes and grape vines with an organic fertilizer before new growth begins.
- 🍷 Feed blueberries with a fertilizer for acid-loving plants. Mulch with oak leaf compost or a thick layer of pine needles.
- 🍷 Prune existing grape vines before their buds grow plump.
- 🍷 Plant fruit bushes and grape vines.

Herbs

- 🌿 Plant Chamomile, Chives, Dill, Fennel, Garlic, Parsley, Rosemary, and Rue.
- 🌿 Butterflies are beginning to migrate through Houston. Feed the adults with the nectar rich blooms of herbs. Any blooming herb will do.
- 🌿 Parsley, Fennel and Rue make great host plants for Black Swallowtail and Giant Swallowtail caterpillars. Plant a couple of extra - these guys have good appetites!

Insect and Disease Control

- 🌿 To control Fireblight on fruit trees apply either a copper or antibiotic containing spray while they are in bloom. Fireblight is a bacterial disease that enters the plant through its flowers.
- 🌿 For non-Fireblight diseases, spray fruit trees when 75% of flowers have fallen to control for diseases. Always follow label directions.
- 🌿 Shrubs that are exhibiting Black Spot Fungus can be sprayed with Daconil. Remove any fallen leaves from underneath the shrub to control the disease more effectively.
- 🌿 If your Water Oaks exhibited Oak Leaf Wilt last year, spray their opening leaf buds with Daconil.



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- ☼ To control scale, and many other overwintering insect pests, spray with dormant oil. Do not spray when nighttime temperatures are predicted to fall below 45 F. Always follow label directions.
- ☼ If Giant Aphids are infesting your oaks, remove them with a strong stream of water, or spray with Insecticidal Soap. Or just simply wait and let the Lady Bug's larvae eat them up.

Lawn Care

- ✗ Do not fertilize the lawn.
- 🌱 Apply seaweed extract to the lawn to stimulate beneficial soil microbe activity for healthy roots.
- 🌱 If you haven't mowed the lawn all winter, mow it once this month. This will allow the sun to reach grass roots.
- 🌱 If the soil is dry enough, begin major lawn work. Remove debris; aerate compacted areas to improve water penetration; Fertilized with compost or organic lawn fertilizer; fill in low spots with sharp sand and topsoil.

Miscellaneous

- ♥ Butterflies are starting to migrate into the area. Plant flowering herbs, nectar rich annuals and perennials to feed them and their caterpillars.
- ♥ Keep a water source in the yard for birds wintering in our area.
- ♥ Clean out bird houses using soap and water.
- ♥ Set up Purple Martin and Chickadee houses.
- ♥ Raise/replenish beds with organic matter such as humus. If you are creating a new bed, raise it at least 6 - 8 inches. Replenish existing beds with an application of seaweed extract.
- ♥ Sign up for a gardening class.
- ♥ Set up a bat box. Bats are free mosquito control!

Perennials and Bulbs

- ♥ Divide crowded perennials such as daylilies, daisies, and etc.
- ♥ Fertilize emerging repeat-blooming daylilies with an organic fertilizer.
- ♥ At the end of this month cut back the dead fronds of ornamental grasses, coneflowers and other perennials that were affected by the cold weather.
- ♥ Pinch the tops of groundcovers to make them spread faster.
- ✗ Do not remove leaves from naturalizing bulbs. They use the foliage to replenish the bulb for next year's blooms.

Shrubs

- ♥ Fertilize shrubs, except camellias and azaleas, with complete fertilizer such as Garden Ville Soil Food or Microlife.
- ♥ Plant new shrubs, and/or transplant existing ones. They'll have 2 months to get established before facing our heat.
- ♥ Remove faded camellia blossoms.
- ♥ If you see yellow leaves on your azaleas, don't panic. They're most likely old and the azaleas are shedding them to make room for new leaves.
- ✗ Do not prune shrubs yet. The new growth can be damaged during February's unexpected cold days.



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Trees

- ✘ It's too early to prune Crape Myrtles.
- 🌳 Shade trees can be pruned now. Large trees should be pruned by a professional arborist.
- 🌳 Call the Harris County Extension Agent (281-855-5600) to obtain a fruit tree pruning/feeding schedule.
- 🌳 Prune fruit trees before they bloom. Remove all small twigs and brittle limb ends. Do not prune excessively if it has never been pruned. Do not top a fruit tree if it is several years old.
- 🌳 Fertilize all trees with a complete fertilizer. Use an organic fertilizer such as Garden Ville Soil Food or Microlife.

Vegetables

- 🍅 Feed rhubarb and asparagus with an organic fertilizer before new growth begins.
- 🍅 Early this month, set out cool-weather vegetables such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, collards, green bunching onions, lettuce, mustard greens, radicchio, potatoes and turnips.
- 🍅 At the end of this month tomato seedlings can be hardened-off outdoors, but be prepared to drag them in them when the night temperatures drop below 50 F.
- 🍅 Try growing an artichoke, a perennial vegetable. They are best grown in large pots, and protected from very cold nights (below 40 F) and our hot summer sun.