

FEBRUARY GARDEN CHECKLIST

In this week's article I want to mention some things gardeners need to be considering for February. The following is a garden checklist:

- ✓ Base any fertilization on a soil test. Take samples from several different spots within a particular area (example – front lawn, annual bed by entry way, vegetable garden, azalea bed, etc.) Bring pint samples of dry soil in plastic sandwich bags to Cooperative Extension office for processing. Samples are mailed to the University of Arkansas Soils Lab in Marianna Arkansas. Free test results will be mailed to you within three weeks.
- ✓ If you're wondering when to apply fertilizer, it's still a little early, in my opinion, to fertilize trees, shrubs, and grasses. Mid to late March is soon enough to fertilize fescue lawns, trees and shrubs. Summer lawns are fertilized at greenup (early May).
- ✓ Mulch strawberry beds now with straw. Keep the straw off the crowns. The straw will keep fruit from touching the soil and rotting.
- ✓ Do any major pruning on trees any time this month. Remember you do not need to use a pruning paint or spray sealant. A clean cut will heal as quickly and in some cases quicker if left alone.
- ✓ This is last call to apply dormant oil to fruit trees. Check label for application instructions. Speaking of fruit trees. If you have just a few trees you can wait to prune them until just before blooming. You could prune all fruit trees now except for peaches. If we get a serious cold snap, exposed wounds on peach trees can result in some major damage, so its best to prune them just before bloom.
- ✓ If you have spring fever and want to do something outdoors, cut the winter burned foliage off of liriopse and mondo grass. Also remove the dead stubble off of ornamental grasses before they resume growth.
- ✓ Most summer and fall blooming perennials can be divided and replanted any time this month. Give extras to your garden friends.
- ✓ Azaleas get hit hard every year with lacebugs. These sucking insects can wreak havoc on an otherwise easy care plant. Without care, the leaves can become bronzed by late summer, and a few plants have even been killed by these insects. Lacebugs don't become active until April or May- depending on the spring we have. You can begin to monitor for them then, and spray as needed, but a newer product may take away any worries. Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub insecticide, also known as Merit, claims that one application in February or early March, can give you a 12 month period of control. It would definitely be worth a try if you are plagued with these pesky insects each year.
- ✓ Prune roses late this month. Remove all the dead and diseased stems first. Make all cuts angled to a strong outward-facing bud. Next, remove all weak wood that is smaller than a pencil in diameter and all canes that are growing to the center of the bush. Then shape the plant by cutting the

- remaining canes back to a uniform height (usually about 24 inches). Seal all cut ends with a drop or two of glue. Also, add mulch if you need to.
- ✓ Late this month or early March prune summer flowering shrubs and hedges. Spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia should be pruned immediately after flowering.
 - ✓ Soak roots of bareroot trees overnight and then plant the following day. Do not fertilize the first year after planting.
 - ✓ One last point I want to let you know about is the Baxter County Master Gardener Seminar on March 10 at the Redeemer Lutheran Church Family Life Center in Mtn. Home. Seminar topics will include annual and perennial flowers, pruning ornamentals, vegetable gardening, and trees in the landscape. This year along with the Baxter County Master Gardeners, we have Janet Carson, Extension Horticulture Specialist from Little Rock, and Dr. Gerald Klingaman, retired Extension Horticulturist-Ornamentals from University of Arkansas, on the program. There is a fee of \$10 per person to attend the seminar. Attendance is limited and pre-registration is required. To register mail name, address, phone number, e-mail and \$10 check payable to BCMG to: BCMG Seminar, 281 Lorraine Place, Mtn. Home, AR 72653.

For more information on any of the above points, contact the Baxter County Cooperative Extension office at 425-2335.