

## Cynthia Brian's February Gardening Guide



Add a rock dry creek and mulch to your garden.

**Here are some tasks to accomplish now.**

- If you haven't already, it is time to turn on the sprinklers and give your garden a deep drink. Check the sprinkler heads on lawns as grass tends to grow over them when not in use during the winter months. If your irrigation system needs a tune-up, professionals have told me that winter is the ideal occasion to schedule appointments for repairs or installations. In the summer months, when we need to irrigate the most, specialists are swamped with emergencies.
- Water in the morning to give plants the opportunity to dry out before night.
- Fertilize trees, shrubs, and ground covers. When it comes to fertilizers, people often wonder what N, P, K mean. N stands for nitrogen which stimulates leaf formation to give plants the luminous, healthy green. P is phosphorus which encourages strong root formation, aids in flowering and fruit set. K is for potassium providing disease resistance and hardiness to plants. The three numbers that you see on labels such as 5-10-15 indicate the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium that the product contains. This listing is required by law on all packages of organic, synthetic, and chemical fertilizers. Keep in mind that although nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are necessary to maintain plant health, there are more than 20 other nutrients needed as well.
- Get a head-start on pulling weeds while they are small, and the ground is malleable. Weeds harbor disease.
- Apply snail bait around plants that are susceptible to snails and slugs.
- Use an organic systemic insecticide around the base of roses to prevent the first flush of aphids.
- Spray fruit trees, roses, and citrus with dormant oil to protect them from overwintering insects and fungal diseases. Copper Sulfate is approved for organic use and offers a strong defense against fungal pathogens. Be sure to follow all safety and application instructions, as copper is a potent control method, and should be used responsibly. Do not spray on windy days. Wash any citrus before consuming. Harvest tangelos, lemons, oranges and limes as needed.
- Check for mole and gopher activity. These rodents do not take a winter hiatus. It's best to trap them before they reproduce.

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Marvelous magnolia liliiflora, known as the tulip magnolia.



A bounty of tangelos on the citrus tree.

Photos Cynthia Brian