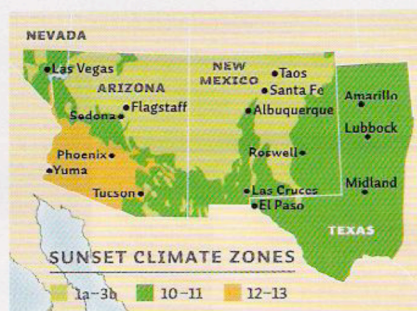


What to do in your garden

February



Planting

Bare-root Sunset climate zones 10–11: Set out bare-root roses and fruit trees, including apples, apricots, berries, peaches, pears, persimmons, and plums. Zones 11–13: Plant bare-root grapes.

Citrus Zones 12–13: Toward the end of the month, you'll find the best selection of citrus at local nurseries. Buy the trees now, but wait to plant until mid-March when chance of frost has passed. Either take trees home and set them in a protected area, such as under an overhang, or ask the nursery to hold them for you.

Flowering crabapples Zones 11–11: For durable ornamental flowering trees, crabapples are a good bet. Cold- and drought-tolerant varieties include 'Hopa', 'Radiant', and 'Spring Snow'. Look for them at local nurseries, or order from Woodstock Nursery (www.wallace-woodstock.com or 888/803-8733).

Flowers Zones 12–13: Plant angelita daisy, autumn sage, desert marigold, desert milkweed (*Asclepias subulata*), paper daisy, Parry's penstemon, and tufted evening primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*).

Herbs Zones 11–13: Sow seeds of chives, cilantro, dill, and parsley. Set out transplants of marjoram, oregano, rosemary, and sage.

Vegetables Zone 3a: Sow seeds of 'Oak Leaf', 'Red Sails', romaine, and other varieties of lettuce. Zone 10: Indoors, start seeds of bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, salad greens, and spinach for

transplanting out in eight weeks. Sow seeds outdoors of kale, onions, and peas. Zone 11: Early in the month, start eggplant, pepper, and tomato seeds indoors for transplanting out in six to eight weeks. One good source of seeds is Botanical Interests (www.botanicalinterests.com or 800/486-2647).

Wildflowers Zones 2b–3a: Sow wildflower seeds now for color later in the season. Try blue flax (*Linum lewisii*), firecracker penstemon, purple coneflower, Rocky Mountain bee plant (*Cleome serrulata*), Rocky Mountain penstemon, and wild oregano (*Monarda austromontana*). Order from Wild Seed (602/276-3536) in Tempe, Arizona.

Maintenance

Care for citrus Zones 12–13: Grapefruit, kumquats, lemons, limes, oranges, and tangelos are ripe and ready to pick. Harvest just enough to eat, leaving the rest on the tree to increase in sweetness. If a freeze (below 32°) is forecast, harvest all of the fruit. Valentine's Day is the traditional reminder to fertilize citrus. To make sure plants get the necessary nutrients, use a citrus and avocado fertilizer.

Fertilize fruit and nut trees Zones 12–13: Feed apples, apricots, grapes, pecans, plums, and other deciduous fruit and nut trees with a balanced fertilizer (such as 16-16-16 or an organic 5-5-5). Water well immediately before and after applying fertilizer.

Protect aloe blooms Zones 12–13: When frost hits candelabra-like aloe bloom stalks during development, it destroys all hope of spring flowers. When freezing temperatures are forecast, cover stalks with frost cloth.

Wait to prune Zones 12–13: It's tempting to prune off frost-damaged branches on bird of paradise, bougainvillea, hibiscus, and lantana, but hold off until at least mid-March. Dead branches offer some protection from additional freezes.

—SCOTT CALHOUN

Tip from the test garden

SHARPENING YOUR SHOVELS not only extends their life—it can also make it much easier to dig through roots or in heavy soil.



1. Using a large file, with shovel facing up, rub briskly along the shovel's bottom edge at a 45° angle, filing from the left side to the tip. Continue until a fine edge develops, then repeat on the right side.



2. If you don't plan to use the shovel right away, apply a small amount of mineral oil to a clean cloth, then wipe the newly sharpened edge to prevent rust from forming. Wipe off before using.