

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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February

Although **February** is the last month of summer, it is usually the hottest and driest. So apart from making sure plants have adequate water, there is not so much to be done in the garden at the moment as there is at other times of the year. Do tasks like turn the **compost** and then use it as a mulch. Clean **tools** and put a coat of **linseed oil** on the wooden handles, and on metal parts to stop them **rusting**.

Clean away **moss, lichen and algae** from paths, walls and driveways with **Copper Sulphate**, spray on or drench from a watering can. Spray the weeds in between cobbles and in driveways with **long term weedkiller** that will slow down the germination of new weedlings.

Deadhead roses, petunias and any other perennials that need it. This will keep them tidy and encourage more flowers. If you find plants seriously stressed from the summer heat, cut them right back, feed them and if they don't come away quickly, then dig them out and replace them.

Prune deciduous trees now, also wisteria, buxus and hedges. Deciduous trees can be pruned in winter, but come spring they tend to sprout a multitude of branches, whereas if you prune in summer, the growth is slower so the regrowth is fewer but stronger branches.

Check your garden for signs of stress, diseases and pests. Spray with appropriate spray, then clean out diseased and dead matter. Then give a liquid feed every week or two to keep the plants healthy. A really good product is Ocean Organics Seaweed Foliar Spray. Used in the morning it's like giving your plants a Multi-Vitamin pill. It increases the plants **immunity** to pests and disease.

If you suspect your **lawn** has **grass grubs** lurking under it, now is the time to treat it with **Soil Insect Killer**. Make sure you water it in well so it gets down to where the grubs are and to make sure it's not left lying on

Bulbs are in store now so get in early to get the best selection of **Anemones, Ranunculus, Gladioli, Fressias, Hyacinths, Tulips** and the ever popular spring **Daffodils**. Check the packet for planting times as some bulbs are better planted when the soil has cooled a little. Some will benefit from a short stint in the fridge before planting.

In the **vegetable garden**, harvest potatoes now if you haven't already. You may even have time to get in another early crop if you buy tubers that already have sprouts on. Feed them well so they grow fast and furious. Pick runner beans every day or two as they grow so quickly they soon get too big and woody. **Mist** the flowers with your garden hose to **aid pollination**. Remove the lower leaves of tomato plants as they get old and diseased. This also increases air flow and sunlight to the ripening fruit.

You can still **sow seeds** of beetroot, carrot, parsnip and spring onion. Plant seedlings now for winter harvests of all the brassicas, ie. Brussel sprouts, cabbages, cauliflower and broccoli. Cover with netting to keep off the white butterflies. Plant also, celery, leeks, silverbeet and spinach.

Lettuces can be planted all year round.

In the **herb garden**, continue to sow seed of coriander, rocket and other salad greens each month for a continuous supply of fresh leaves. If the parsley went to seed over summer, then replace it now so it gets good growth before winter comes. Keep mint in the shade and well watered. So for a '**quiet**' month in the garden, there is still plenty to do.

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