

SICKLES



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What to Do in the Garden in February

By Pat Dumas



Is there really anything to DO in the garden in February you ask? The ground is rock hard and you wonder how anything can possibly survive and re-emerge in April and May.

Not to fret. You can still get your hands “virtually” dirty by flipping through the enormous amount of catalogs that come in the dead of winter. Get an idea of what you’d like to find at your local garden center. It’s eye candy, and a sweet pursuit on a cold evening.

If you’d like to get an eclectic group of catalogs in the mail, check out [Cyndi’s Catalog of Garden Catalogs](#). Here you can browse away and select the catalogs that suit your interests. Then come on in and see us at Sickles, and we’ll talk about what we’re ordering for the summer!



Here are a few things to think about in February

- When it snows heavily, make sure you go out and fluff off the snow from bushes and small trees. Snow weighs them down and can easily break branches of Azalea, Rhododendron and Forsythia.
- Keep an eye out indoors for pests on your overwintering tropical plants. White Fly and Scale love to attack indoor houseplants. Try a systemic powder like Bonide Systemic Granules. It will prevent attacks all winter.



- Enjoy the art of forcing branches in your home. Forsythia and Pussy Willow are a real joy to see popping their buds in the house. Quince, flowering cherry, peach and most fruit tree branches make gorgeous displays indoors. Here’s a good tip from

our own florist Nancy: Place branches in a large bucket of warm water (a large white spackle bucket is perfect) and drop in a tablespoon of bleach and a teaspoon of any liquid flower food. The bleach keeps bacteria from forming. When the flowers start to pop, place in a vase with water and keep in a cool spot away from the sun. Mist frequently. Remember, you can cut Pussy Willow branches as early as late January and early February. In the wild, you'll find Pussy Willow already popping in February.

- A dormant oil spray is something great to try if you haven't done it before. Spraying apple and other fruit trees, as well as roses in late winter can keep disease and insect borers from destroying fruit AND roses in the future.



- If the winter is particularly dry and damaging, spray some Wilt Proof anti-desiccation spray on your evergreens—particularly the Rhododendrons and Azaleas. They take a huge hit when the weather is destructive. It keeps moisture in and protects against the cold and drying winds.
- Last, but not least, I can't emphasize enough the enjoyment I get in starting hard to find flowers by seed indoors. Seeds are out on Sickles Market's racks by now and last year I experimented with growing Sweet Peas from seed. It was a great success. They germinated indoors in soil-less mix, and were hardened off outdoors under plastic in the sun. They LOVE the cold weather and need an early start to bloom before the heat comes in. Try it! The fragrance of a sweet pea is to die for! Come in and ask us how!

Have a nice February, and come on in and see some very special houseplants to enjoy in the cold months. Stop by and ask questions! We love to talk plants.