



# THE NEW HORT THYMES

**CLEVELAND COUNTY  
EXTENSION**

Serving Cleveland County, Oklahoma with the most up to date gardening,  
lawn, landscaping, and horticulture information.



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## Be Kind To Your Trees

### *Intense pruning can have adverse effects*

Warm days in February can be a huge relief for gardeners. It gives us a chance to get out, soak up some sun, and do some maintenance before spring comes in full force. One of the late winter duties is pruning ornamentals. This is a good way to refresh some flowering shrubs in the landscape.

That is unless you top your trees.

Commonly done to crapemyrtles, and nicknamed “crape murder”, topping does not do anything for trees and shrubs. Resilient plants will continue to grow, but with an altered shape and fewer blooms. When pruning shrubs, consider removing suckers, branches that are crossed, damaged, or diseased. Lightly prune the tips to remove old flower stalks. Removing the twiggy growth also allows for better air circulation, which can decrease pest pressure in the canopy. If a plant has outgrown it’s space, it is better to replace the plant with something more appropriate than topping it. Also consider the bloom time of a plant. If it blooms in early spring, like a forsythia, wait until after blooming to prune.

# Considerations for Backyard Fruit Trees

Backyard fruit trees can enhance the landscape with spring blooms, provide high-quality fruits, and serve as a satisfying hobby. However, home fruit trees require considerable care. Those not able to devote time to the fruit trees may be disappointed with results. Consider some of these guidelines before planting fruit trees. Knowing what all is involved and being able to devote the time can result in a bountifully sweet harvest.

- Most tree fruits require annual maintenance. This includes pruning, training, and fruit thinning. Some trees need staking or trellising, especially when young.
- Most fruit trees require pesticide applications to control insects and diseases. Pesticide applications to control diseases should be proactive. Once infection occurs, it cannot be reversed. Pesticide applications to control insects can be based off monitoring populations.
- Fruit trees prefer a sandy loam soil with a slightly acidic pH. Good drainage is crucial to the success of fruit trees, especially in areas with heavy clay soils. Drainage can be improved by installing drain tiling, planting trees on berms, or planting in raised beds.
- Planting fruit trees on gentle slopes where cold air can drain away will lessen frost and freeze damage to blossoms in spring. It can also help with frost damage in fall. The slope direction can impact the sunlight exposure and temperature. Northern and eastern facing slopes tend to be cooler. This can delay ripening of fall-harvested fruits.
- Choosing rootstocks can be very important for fruit trees. It influences tree size and whether or not staking is required. It also affects disease resistance, winter hardiness, and tolerance to various soils.
- Consider pollination requirements of different fruits. Many fruits require that the flower is pollinated with pollen from different cultivars of the same fruit. Planting only one cultivar of these fruit often results in masses of blooms in the spring, but few or no fruits.
- Recommended varieties for Oklahoma can be found in our fact sheet HLA-6222 Home Fruit Tree Planting Guide.



Photos from Michigan State University

# Principles of Floral Design

Valentine's Day bouquets can come with a large price tag. One way to save some money this year is to create a DIY flower arrangement. Not only is it a way to show affection to loved ones, but it is also a way to express oneself creatively. To create a beautiful bouquet, follow the principles of floral arranging to create a pleasing and interesting design.

## Balance

Balance means that the arrangement does not look as though it will fall over after completion. Consider balance from all sides – top to bottom, side to side, and front to back. There are two types of balance – symmetrical (or formal) and asymmetrical (or informal). Symmetrical means that one side is almost a mirror image of the other. Asymmetrical means that the plant material are different on either side, but they have equal visual weight.



Balanced & Symmetrical



Balanced & Asymmetrical



Unbalanced

## Focal Point

A focal point is an area or portion of the design that attracts the eye. This is usually placed towards the low, center of the design. The focal point is usually comprised of a large flower or brightly colored flowers, so that it attracts attention and breaks up the horizontal line of the container.



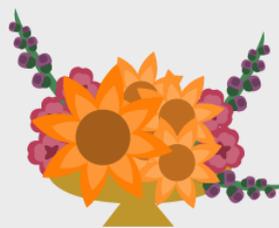
Strong Focal Point



Weak Focal Point

## Rhythm

This principle of design refers to movement. The motion in a floral arrangement should create a dominant visual path, carrying the eye throughout the entire design. Rhythm is achieved through repetition of shapes or colors. It can also be achieved through a gradual change in size, weight, texture, or color.



Strong Rhythm



Weak Rhythm



Photo from University of Maryland Extension

## February Plant of the Month: Onions

One of the first vegetables to be planted in the spring garden

Onions are a fun vegetable to grow in the garden. They are a great way to add flavor to recipes and can be a refreshing addition to sandwiches and salads. Onions can be planted from February 15 to March 10. It is easiest to plant onions from sets rather than seeds. They require loose, well-drained soil for ideal bulb formation.

Onion varieties are characterized by day-length. “Long-day” onion varieties will quit forming tops and focus on bulb growth when day length reaches 14 to 16 hours. “Short-day” onion varieties will start making bulbs earlier, when day length is 10 to 12 hours long. “Intermediate-day” onions are in between the two. Short-day and intermediate-day onions are recommended for Oklahoma, as it gets hot too quickly for long-day onions.



**Sets** /sets/: small, dry onion bulbs that have been grown the previous year

## Garden Tips for February

- Keep all plants watered during dry conditions, even if dormant
- Thoroughly water plantings at least 24 hours before a hard freeze, if the soil is dry
- Plant bare rooted trees and shrubs
- Fertilize fruit trees, nut trees, and shrubs
- Finish pruning shade trees, summer flowering shrubs, and hedges; wait until after flowering for spring blooming shrubs
- Prune fruit trees
- Begin planting perennial garden crops later in the month; this includes blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, and asparagus
- Fertilize tulips in early February
- Start vegetable transplants
- Plant cool-season vegetables like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peas, and potatoes
- Continue mowing cool-season lawns (fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass)
- Control broadleaf weeds in well-established lawns with post-emergent herbicides
- Control summer weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide in well-established lawns
- Get a soil test and amend garden soil as needed
- Provide feed and unfrozen water for birds
- Clean up birdhouses before spring tenants arrive
- Avoid salting sidewalks as it can damage plant material; use alternative products like sand or kitty litter for traction
- Make structural improvements to the garden and landscape

## Eat Seasonally

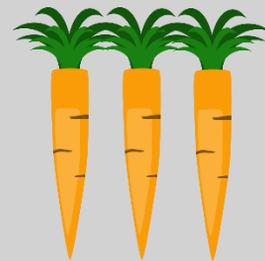
In-season produce is fresher, cheaper, more nutritious, and better for the environment. These are some of the seasonal crops for February:

Avocado



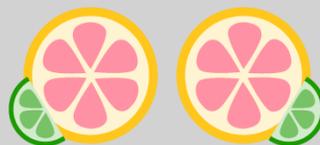
Broccoli

Cabbage



Carrots

Cauliflower



Citrus

Lettuce



Radishes

Spinach



To see all OSU Extension events, please visit  
[www.calendar.okstate.edu/oces](http://www.calendar.okstate.edu/oces)

Use the County/Department filter for events unique  
to **Cleveland County**.

Use the Program Area filter to for events that are  
specific to **Agriculture and Natural Resources**.



**About the editor...**

Courtney DeKalb-Myers has been the Cleveland County horticulture educator since August 2018. Her position handles homeowner inquiries, master gardener advisement, and other horticulture education programming throughout the state. She is originally from Norman, Oklahoma and developed a passion for gardening at a young age. She went onto study horticulture at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater with an emphasis in entrepreneurship. After graduating from OSU, she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to attend NC State for graduate school. Her research was heavily focused on vegetable production, specifically processing tomatoes for a local salsa product. The emphasis on local products motivated her to move back to Oklahoma and she is so excited to now serve the town that raised her.

