

Your Garden In February

By Sue McDougall,
Horticulturalist & Gardening Personality

Achieve gorgeous gardens by gardening for your climatic conditions!

The official end of summer is close. Dare we dream about the planting season and the new plants we can put in the garden or areas we can change? Late summer is the best time to reassess the garden, pots, balcony, and alfresco area to make decisions on what could be changed for improved resilience for next summer.

What to look for when reassessing your garden!

- Burnt foliage may indicate underwatering or wrong plant selection for the location.
- Grey green patches that appear overnight on lawn areas indicate there is inadequate overlap in the irrigation system and these areas are underwatered in the heat of summer.
- Small potted plants in full sun struggling. Repot into larger pots so there is a larger volume of soil around the roots and they stay cool on hot days.
- Wilted leaves that are still pliable will be a symptom of overwatering. Something many gardeners tend to do when it's hot and they are caring for potted plants.
- Stretched plants indicated it's too shady for them. Select another variety or move into a more well-lit position.



Must do gardening jobs in February

Sneaking a few minutes here and there in the garden is the theme for the February garden. The vegie garden is overflowing with produce, it's a little early and hot to replant and all the work done over the last few months can be enjoyed. It's time to lie back in the hammock and enjoy the garden, with only a few must do jobs this month.

- Keep Basil flowers trimmed off to encourage new soft growth. If it sets too many seed heads, it's at the expense of leaves.
- Give the Apricot tree a summer prune to reduce the incidence of bacterial gummosis which causes dieback of the branches. Trees are relatively short lived, so pruning is important to stimulate vigorous new growth. Apply **Seasol** around the tree's canopy to promote strong healthy growth after the stresses of being pruned.
- The Black English Mulberry has just finished fruiting. This late fruiting tree has the most flavorsome fruit. It is also the slowest growing of all the Mulberry varieties, trees can survive for many years becoming a firm favourite with children and adults alike. It's time to trim the tree if needed and even though they survive without much care they will respond to a mulch with compost or pea hay and an application of complete fertiliser. Apply **Seasol plus Nutrients Fruit & Citrus** around the tree's canopy to revitalise and boost soil and plant health.
- Cymbidium Orchids are initiating their flower spikes now, even though it feels like months before they are actually in full flower. High humidity, bright light, but not direct sun and apply a complete liquid fertiliser for flowering plants such as **PowerFeed PRO Series Roses & Flowers** will help them develop big full flower.
- Warm weather causes ponds to green up due to warm weather and extra nutrients in the water. Barley straw has been proven to inhibit the growth of algae. As it breaks down it releases natural chemicals that stop new algae growing. It's cheap, easy to use, and environmentally friendly lasting up to 6 months.
- Grapevines add a touch of summer shade to any garden, not only do they look lovely but they also produce juicy fruit to much on while working in the garden. Grapes may need to be treated for mildew as it tends to reoccur at this time of year. This fungus appears on the fruit in humid weather. To reduce the chance of getting mildew, prune some of the foliage around the vine to increase airflow. Apply **Seasol** and **PowerFeed All Purpose including Natives** to grapevines to promote healthy growth and help reduce the stresses from heat, drought, pests and diseases.



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Creating super shade with trees

Never underestimate the benefits of trees in the garden and the shade cast from a spreading canopy of foliage is difficult to repeat with a man-made structure. Planting a tree on the west side of the garden will protect plants and the house from extreme temperatures and afternoon sun, hopefully saving dollars in cooling costs.

Revamping a garden under the canopy of advanced trees can have some challenges. Follow these simple tips to gorgeous, shaded gardens:

- Trees skim the soil surface for moisture and nutrients, so when planting underneath advanced trees, dig large wide oversize holes, Don't be afraid to cut tree roots if needed as advanced trees can tolerate root pruning. Water in with **Seasol GOLD** (30mL of concentrate per 9 litres of water) to promote rapid, strong root development and plant establishment.
- Plant advanced plants, the larger the better. As roots of the tree extend through the soil of the new plants, they will require a strong root system of their own to continue to grow. Growth rates are usually slower when competing with large trees.
- Use liquid fertiliser regularly on understory plants such as **PowerFeed All Purpose including Natives** as this will help to boost plant growth and improve health, moisture retention and nutrient uptake. Apply over the foliage rather than around the soil, so the hose-on option is easy and simple to apply. Just attach to your hose and off you go. Remember on hot and dry days apply in the cool of the day, early morning or late afternoon is a great time. Also, if you get some on your paving or timber, simply wash off with water.



Figs

Figs are dripping with fruit and their sweet soft flesh is a favourite of many. They will fruit successfully in a large pot and can be trained to espalier along a wall for unique feature. Unfortunately, a fig tree's reproduction precedes them, and the root system can be very destructive if not contained. Small garden = large pot.

Never plant a fig tree in a small backyard unless the root system is contained with a professionally installed root barrier product. Figs are also a favourite of the fruit fly. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish between fruit fly larvae and fig. A handy tip to prevent fruit fly damage is to cover the fruit with a paper bag a few weeks before they are ripe. This will also prevent bird damage and you can enjoy fresh pesticide free figs.



Desert Colour

For summer colour in pots, look no further than the Adenium or Desert Rose. Perfect for beginner gardeners will reward you with large open flowers ranging in colour from white to hot pink.

This tropical shrub loves hot dry conditions and is ideal as a potted plant or in a protected yet well-lit courtyard.



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