

# What To Plant And Do In the Food Garden In February

By John Ditchburn (Ditchy), The Backyard Food Gardener [www.urbanfoodgarden.org](http://www.urbanfoodgarden.org)

WHAT TO PLANT IN FEBRUARY (cool mountainous) *		
FROM SEED	FROM SEEDLING	IN SEEDLING BOXES #
BEETROOT	BROCCOLI <sup>X</sup>	BROCCOLI <sup>X</sup>
CARROT	BRUSSELS SPROUTS <sup>X</sup>	BRUSSELS SPROUTS <sup>X</sup>
LETTUCE	CABBAGE <sup>X</sup>	CABBAGE <sup>X</sup>
PAK CHOI <sup>X</sup>	CAULIFLOWER <sup>X</sup>	CAULIFLOWER <sup>X</sup>
PARSNIP	LETTUCE	LEEK
ROCKET	PAK CHOI <sup>1X</sup>	LETTUCE
SILVERBEET	LEEK	PAK CHOI <sup>1X</sup>
SPINACH	SILVERBEET	SILVERBEET
SPRING ONION		
TURNIP		

\* Key vegetables only, not all vegetables that can be planted at this time are listed. # Sow in seedling boxes for planting out in four to six weeks time. 1 Best sown in single cell seedling trays as these seedlings don't like their roots being disturbed when transplanted. X Prone to cabbage butterfly damage when grown this time of year. (Parenthesis) Grow in greenhouse or temporary polytunnel. DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in glass/plastic covered seedling box. RED DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in artificially heated seedling hot box. E or L Only Early or Late in the month.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

- **Clear Summer crops in preparation for late Summer and early Autumn plantings.**

If you are not going to use the beds immediately then cover them with a light layer of mulch.

- **Keep training the tomato laterals you want and removing those you don't want.**

Also cut the tops of any shoots that have grown too high. The ideal place to cut the tops off is just above the highest bunch of developing tomato fruit.

- **Regularly check your tomato plants to see if there are any ripe tomatoes to be picked.**

If birds are eating your ripe tomatoes then pick them as soon as they get their first flush of pink and bring them in to ripen off inside.



Pruning the tops of tomato shoots encourages fruit growth.

- **Check maturing corn cobs to see if they are ready to harvest.**

Corn cobs are close to maturity when the silks begin to darken. If you are not sure then gently peel back the husk at the top of an ear to see if the cob is ready to eat. Once the first of the corn is ripe you will only have seven to ten days to harvest the crop before the cobs become too hard to eat fresh. What you can't eat fresh should be cut up into cobbettes then par boiled and frozen.



LEFT: Corn ear with brown silks. When the silks are brown the corn is ready or nearly ready to pick. RIGHT: Corn that has been cut into cobbettes, par boiled then frozen.

- As well as harvesting tomatoes and corn pay special attention to zucchinis and beans as they will get away from you in no time if not constantly monitored.

- **Keep up a regular watering schedule.**

Ideally this should be done in the morning so that the surface soil is dry by the end of the day. Watering late in the day creates the moist conditions that attract snails and slugs. Seedlings and young plants require a daily light water while larger vegetables only need a heavy watering every two or three days. Pay special attention to capsicum, celery and Pak choi as they are very water hungry plants and do not do well in dry soil conditions.

- **Begin planting Autumn crops such as English spinach, and brassicas (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts).**

Late summer and early autumn is also a good time to plant Chinese vegetables such as Pak Choi, Tatsoi, Mizuna and Chinese cabbage.

- **Add lime to beds that will be planted with lime-loving plants.**

These include broad beans, peas, English spinach, onions, garlic and most brassicas .

- **When planting seedlings shade them with 50% shadecloth.**

In warmer weather shaded seedlings establish themselves more quickly than ones planted in full sunlight. An alternative to shadecloth is to loosely sprinkle straw over each seedling. As the seedlings grow they will push their way through the straw.



Silverbeet seedlings covered with 50% shadecloth. The shadecloth will be removed as soon as the seedlings have established themselves.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE GREENHOUSE

- **Harvest vegetables ready to be harvested.**

Not only do greenhouse grown vegetables mature at a faster rate than garden vegetables they also become overripe more quickly. So it is especially important to

harvest eggplants and cucumbers before this happens as eggplants turn bitter if left too long and cucumbers become large and tasteless.

- **On very hot days spray the plants with water or run mist sprayers.**

Also keep the greenhouse doors and windows open day and night throughout the summer. If you are in a particularly hot area you may need to cover the entire greenhouse with shadecloth.

## WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN

- **Continue to give your fruit trees a deep water as needed, usually about once or twice a week in dry weather.**

Apply extra water to trees with fruit approaching maturity.

- **Place nets over your grapevines or fruit protection bags over each bunch of grapes.**

Remove the smaller bunches. Reducing the number of grape bunches will produce larger individual grapes in the remaining bunches.



LEFT: Pruning small bunches of grapes. RIGHT: Larger bunch of grapes covered with a fruit protection bag.

- **Net fruit trees approaching harvest time and harvest the fruit when ripe.**

Give the trees a light prune before placing the nets on. This is to reduce the likelihood of shoots growing through the nets. Remove the nets as soon as the last of the fruit has been picked. If you can't eat the fruit fresh then preserve as much as you can and give the rest away. Poor quality windfalls should be gathered up and composted or fed to the chickens as rotting fruit under fruit trees encourages pests and disease.