

## The week ahead

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|--|---|--|
| <p><b>TUESDAY</b><br/><b>HEALTHY LIVING</b><br/><b>CAFFEINE 101:</b> Trying to kick the habit? Read this first</p> | <p><b>WEDNESDAY</b><br/><b>TASTE</b><br/><b>BUDGET MEALS:</b> Mix and match inexpensive staples for memorable family dishes</p> | <p><b>THIS WEEK</b><br/><b>HOME</b><br/><b>STATE-THOMAS STYLE:</b> A physician renovates a former Victorian boarding house</p> |
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## Today on dallasnews.com

### How can we help?

**Tell us:** Have you moved to the Dallas area recently? If so, tell us what you struggled with as a newcomer. What are you still looking for? Tell us what kind of information you need.

**E-mail sundaylife**  
[@dallasnews.com](mailto:dallasnews.com)



### Which pet is cutest?

**Tell us:** Are any of this week's pets cuter than yours? Vote for your favorite, and send your pet's photo.

**dallasnews.com**  
[/pets](http://pets)

### Chores checklist

**Online:** We've made the list. You get to check it twice. Find out what to do around the house and garden this month.

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[/home](http://home)

## HOME

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## CHORES

# Sow indoors, and get a jump on spring

By **RICK ROSEN**  
Staff Writer  
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Vegetable gardeners can get a head start on spring by sowing seeds indoors. You'll save money because you won't have to buy transplants. And, harvesting vegetables that you grew from seed can be very satisfying.

In addition, organic gardeners will know that their food was grown without synthetic chemicals. Growing from seeds also is great for gardeners who trade seeds with other gardeners or grow heirloom vegetables that nurseries don't carry.

Raising seedlings that you later transplant outdoors is not difficult. Here are the basics:

### CONTAINER

Almost any container, as long as it is shallow, will work. Gardeners use egg cartons, cut-off milk cartons, foam coffee cups and shoeboxes. Almost any material — wood, metal, plastic and styrofoam — is OK. Make sure the container is deep enough to hold at least 3 inches of soil. If it has no drainage, punch holes in the bottom.

### MEDIA

Gardeners have had success with potting soils designed for houseplants, or with soilless mixes (some combination of sphagnum peat, perlite, vermiculite, sand or other non-soil materials). Garden centers carry these.

To save money, you could use soil from the garden. However, pasteurize the soil before planting seeds to kill any fungi or harmful bacteria. (The soilless mixes at the garden center don't need pasteurization.) To pasteurize, simply heat the soil in an oven for an hour or so at 180 to 200 degrees Fahrenheit (experts don't agree on the absolute best temperature). Let the soil cool, and plant. Some growers mix in perlite or peat to improve drainage.

If cost is no factor, get a seed starter kit, sold by garden centers, that contain everything you need.

### SOWING SEEDS

Seed packets are your guide. The packet will say how far apart to space the seeds and how deep to plant them. If you don't have a packet, experts offer a few guidelines: Plant seeds 2 inches apart; barely cover them with media, generally using only enough to make the seeds disappear from view.

### CARE

After sowing, water gently. A rule of thumb is to give them enough moisture so that water drains from the bottom of the container. After that, you can water periodically.



An easier method is to cover the container with plastic wrap or seal the container in a plastic bag, such as a sandwich bag. The method is the same used in terrariums. You won't have to add water until the seedlings begin to emerge from the soil.

Generally, seeds don't need light to germinate. But they do need the proper soil temperature. Texas AgriLife Extension Service experts recommend keeping the soil temperature from 70 to 75 degrees during the day and at least 60 degrees at night.

After the seeds break the surface, discard the plastic if you used that method and give the container plenty of light, natural or gro-lights.

### WHEN TO SOW

Seed packets tell how long seedlings takes to emerge. Just count backward from the last average day of frost, which in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is March 13, according to the National Weather Service, to arrive at the best date to sow.

### WHEN TO TRANSPLANT

Transplant seedlings when the first set of strong-looking leaves forms. Water thoroughly. To acclimate them, shade them so they aren't in strong sunlight for a couple of days.

### SEED-GROWING GUIDE

Here are some vegetables you can grow from seed now:

VEGETABLE	TIME TO GROW TRANSPLANTS
Cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower	5 to 7 weeks
Cucumber	2 to 3 weeks
Eggplant	7 to 8 weeks
Lettuce	4 to 6 weeks
Onions	8 to 10 weeks
Peppers	7 to 8 weeks
Squash	2 to 3 weeks
Tomatoes	5 to 6 weeks
Watermelon	2 to 3 weeks

SOURCE: Texas AgriLife Extension Service

## CALENDAR

### 'Pursuing the Wind: Paintings and Flowers'

Painting and artwork by members of the Association of Oriental Arts are combined with floral displays by members of the Dallas Chapter of Sogetsu and the Fort Worth and Dallas Chapters of Ikebana International. Exhibition runs through Jan. 28. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday. Main Gallery, Irving Arts Center, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving. Free. 972-252-7558.

## GARDENING

**GARDENING WITH ROSES:** Series of classes presents facets of rose growing, including a hands-on pruning clinic. 9-10 a.m. Saturdays through Feb. 9. Farmers Branch Community Recreation Center, 14050 Heartside Place, Farmers Branch. Free. For information: 972-919-2625; to register: 972-247-4607. Classes include:

- Modern Hybrid Tea Roses — Jan. 19, presented by Dr. John Allen, master rosarian
- The Other 90 Percent: Old Garden Roses, Chinas, Noisettes, Floribundas — Jan. 26, by Claude Graves, master rosarian
- Elements of Pruning — Feb. 2, presented by Turner Hasty, consulting rosarian
- Soil Amendments — Feb. 9, by Baron Ablon of Soil Building Systems

**TEA GARDEN WALK:** Learn how to make tea from herbs in your garden. Also, find out about the tools of the trade. 10-11 a.m. Saturday. Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park, 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Free with admission. 214-428-7476, ext. 23.

**ORCHID DELIRIUM:** Lecture at North Haven Gardens. 1:30 p.m. Saturday. 7700 Northaven Road. Free. 214-363-5316.

### PRUNING FRUIT TREES AND GRAPE VINES:

Lecture by Dr. Kevin Ong, extension plant pathologist specialist. Includes hands-on practice. Bring clean pruning shears. Presented by Education Community Gardens. 9 a.m. Saturday. Education Building, Texas A&M Dallas Research and Extension Center, 17360 Coit Road. Free. 972-952-9256. [www.educationcommunitygardens.org](http://www.educationcommunitygardens.org).

**THE BENEFITS OF LADYBUGS:** Program at the Greater Fort Worth Herb Society meeting. 9:30 a.m. Saturday. Redbud Hall, Deborah Beggs Moncrief Garden Center, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd., Fort Worth. Free. 817-488-7262.

**BUILD SOIL WITH COMPOST:** Program by Mary J. Tynes, Master Composter. Daylily Growers of Dallas meeting. 10 a.m.-noon Saturday. North Haven Gardens, 7700 Northaven Road. Free. 972-670-0072.

**THE ABCS OF PLANT LIFE:** Program by Jim Varnum, master naturalist and amateur botanist. Native Plant Society of Texas, Dallas Chapter, meeting. 7 p.m. Monday. REI Outdoor Equipment Store, 4515 LBJ Freeway. Free. 214-616-7759.

**HEIRLOOM SOUTHERN BULBS:** Program by Chris Wiesinger, owner of Southern Bulb Company. Dallas Area Historical Rose Society meeting. 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. Ridgewood Recreation Center, 6818 Fisher Road. Free. 972-620-1131.

**GROWING PERENNIALS AND NATIVE PLANTS IN CONTAINERS:** Program by Lucy Harrell, organic consultant and landscape designer. Organic Garden Club of Fort Worth meeting. 7 p.m. Tuesday. Redbud Hall, Deborah Beggs Moncrief Garden Center, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd., Fort Worth. Free. 817-274-8460.

— Sigrid Mureen

Please submit information about events 14 days before the date of publication to [home@dallasnews.com](mailto:home@dallasnews.com).

## Preserving a century-plant stalk

We have a century plant in our back yard that bloomed this past summer. The leaves have since withered, but the 17-foot stalk is still standing. I understand that the dried stalks often are used as yard ornaments. When is the best time to cut it? And after it is cut, is there anything specific we should do to preserve it?

B.R., Dallas

I would cut the stalk off now and hang it upside down for a month or so to allow it to dry thoroughly. It should last a long time as a dried flower. No other treatment should be needed.

We want to plant grass around a new apartment building. We have a tight budget and want to be thrifty with water in the future. What type of grass do you recommend if we plant from seeds?

R.S., Arlington

Bermuda is the easiest to establish and the cheapest in the short term. Buffalo is the best quality and the most cost-effective in the long term.

I have a 2-foot-by-18-foot strip of soil next to a 5-year-old concrete

## ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT  
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slab. Something is leaching into the soil from the concrete. I want to grow plants in this area to improve the appearance. I've planted ivy, which died, and now I have Carolina jessamine that is virtually dead. Only Asian jasmine seems to survive there. What can I do to the soil to counteract this leaching? Or what could survive there?

J.K., Lufkin

Whatever is leaching from the concrete will be highly alkaline and chemically imbalanced for growing plants. To solve the problem until the leaching stops, add lots of compost, coffee grounds and other organic amendments to the soil. (See Resources to learn



If eaten, Carolina jessamine is poisonous to people.

more.)

Use native plants that tolerate less-than-acid conditions, and make sure the soil isn't too wet.

Is Carolina jessamine poisonous? I need an evergreen vine to create a screen on a long section of fence, but dogs and horses may have access to it.

A.M., Poetry

I have heard no reports of animal poisonings, but the plant is poisonous to humans if any part of it is eaten. Although casual contact is not a problem, the native cross vine may be a better choice.

I received a hydrangea for Mother's Day. It bloomed for a while and then stopped. It is indoors, and I wash it with soapy water. Recently, I found very fine webs on it and small white bugs. I dosed it again with soapy water. Should I cut it back?

J.D., Sherman

Household soaps can contaminate the soil, so use alcohol instead to kill insects. Plant Wash sprayed on the foliage also works. (See Resources to obtain instructions.)

The presence of bugs indicates that the plant is in stress. Give it very bright indirect light, keep the soil moist but not sopping wet, and fertilize with Nature's Creation Quick Dissolve Indoor Plant Food. Do not prune the plant.

## RESOURCES

**ONLINE:** [www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com) for free organic-program handouts

**RADIO:** KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. [www.ksky.com](http://www.ksky.com).

**MAIL:** P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

# Shopping the town

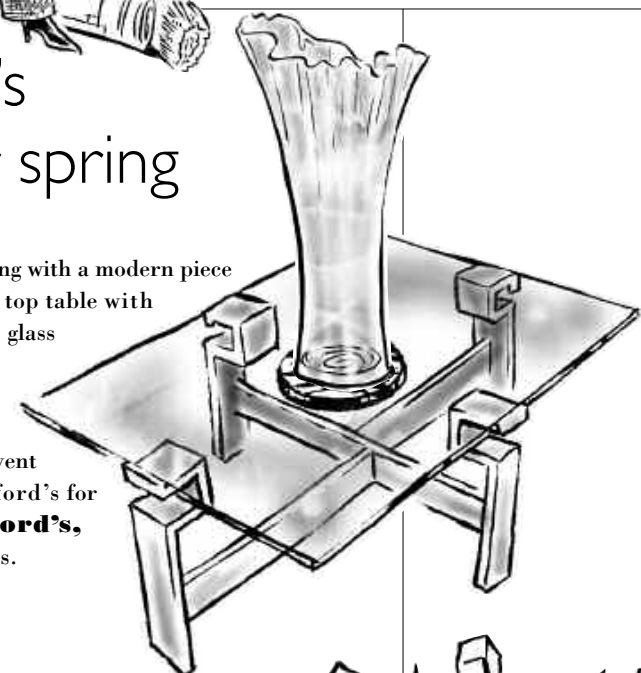


## Designer week Jan. 20-26

Forestwood invites all interior designers to participate in its first annual designer week. Complimentary gift certificates, hors d'oeuvres and drinks served daily from 4 to 6 p.m. Market shoppers are welcome. **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. daily. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Sunday, 972-661-0001.

## Rutherford's is ready for spring

Freshen your traditional setting with a modern piece such as this sensational glass top table with a steel base. A hand-blown glass vase beautifully complements contemporary or traditional décor. Spring is just around the corner — it's time to reinvent your interior. Call Rutherford's for free consultation. **Rutherford's**, 5417 West Lovers Lane, Dallas. 214-357-0888. [www.rutherforddesign.com](http://www.rutherforddesign.com).



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