It is time to clean out the garden plot, work 2-3 inches of compost into the soil and plant cool season crops. February 1 through March 1 are the dates recommended by Texas A&M to plant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leafy lettuces, onion, English peas, parsley, kohlrabi, collards and beets. Potatoes can be planted two weeks later. Wait until the last frost date of March 24 to plant your warm weather crops. If you grew a cover crop of vetch, clover, or rye over the winter you can till this green fertilizer into the soil now. Apply 5-7 pounds of fertilizer per 100 feet to the garden before planting. Be sure to work in your compost, then add plants and water.

Forget about planting your vegetables in soldier straight lines and give a try to square foot gardening. You could make 4x4 or 2x4 beds and place a grid made of nylon twine over the planting area. Plant different vegetables in each 12 inch square. The number of plants per square differs with the plant size, for example, one broccoli per square, four lettuce per square, nine spinach per square, sixteen onion or carrots per square. The square foot concept of gardening makes maintenance easier and each grid looks like a living work of art.

How can I control plants diseases in my garden? It is most important to add organic material such as compost or to turn under a green cover crop (vetch, clover, rye). Organic matter increases microorganisms in the soil. Rotate crops so that they aren't planted in the same location more than once every 2-3 years. Be sure to plant disease resistant varieties, and keep it clean by removing any diseased leaves or plants. Keep sick plants away from the garden. Control weeds and water plants when necessary.

Mark the date of March 26. Bell County master gardeners are hosting a vegetable, herb, rose, tree and perennial plant sale. Be sure to come and select the right plants for your garden!
Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: The calendar says winter, but February 1 - March 1 is the time to plant cool season crops. If you don't have a garden plot plant your veggies in pots or tuck them into your flower beds. Just find a spot with 6 hours of sunlight. If planting your garden in pots, you will have to water more often, perhaps even daily.