

February 2026

Powhatan Monthly

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A February Gardener's State of Mind

by Kim Amboy



This time of year, Green Thumbs get a bit antsy being stuck indoors. Winter has lost its charm, everyone's got a bad case of cabin fever, and growers are jonesing to get outside, enjoy the warmth of spring, and get their hands back in the dirt. Sadly, that's not for a few weeks yet. However, February in Virginia is transition time—time to get into the gardening mindset. While my thumb isn't even remotely green (more like chartreuse), I've learned from my own research and visiting a local gardening guru that there are plenty of things to do to make the time go by quickly.

Garden Prep & Planning

It's a good time to review last year's garden: What worked? What didn't? If pests or disease were a problem, it might be a good idea to plan a crop rotation to minimize the hassle. Also, clean pots and seed trays with a mild bleach solution to prevent disease.

While you're in the planning mode, it's also time to buy or order this year's seeds, because popular varieties sell out quickly.



Pruners, shovels, and mower blades will need a good cleaning and sharpening to be ready when you need them.

Soil Care

Now is the time to get your soil tested (especially if you haven't in a few years). Virginia Cooperative Extension offers affordable testing. >>>



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And, if the soil is workable, amend it with well-rotted manure or compost. And speaking of compost, try to minimize weed seeds in the pile...you'll save yourself a lot of work in the growing season to come.

Perennials, Trees, Shrubs & Pruning

It's pruning time! Trim fruit trees (apple, pear, peach), and roses before new growth starts, but don't prune spring-flowering shrubs like azalea, forsythia, or lilac—they already have buds. Keep an eye out for winter damage and remove any broken branches. Also, take this time to divide perennials such as daylilies and hostas if the soil is workable.



Early Planting (Weather Permitting)

Start your vegetable and herb seedlings indoors to give them a headstart—tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and herbs like basil and parsley. I learned the hard way that window light doesn't produce the best results, and my seedlings were terribly "leggy". Consider purchasing a full spectrum plant light for optimal seedling growth. The garden center at your local Southern States will have everything needed to get you growing.



Yes, fellow garden enthusiasts, it might still be cold outside, but that doesn't mean we can't roll up our sleeves this month and start preparing for the upcoming growing season. May your harvest be bountiful!



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February 2026 Powhatan Monthly

Love Sweet Love

by Steve Cook

Chocolate and Love – those two words go together so beautifully. Why do you suppose that is?

According to the website TotallyChocolate.com, chocolate isn't just a symbol of love—it chemically mimics the feelings of romance. The website goes on to throw around such lovely words as phenylethylamine, theobromine, and endorphin release, but try whispering those sweet nothings into your true love's ear and see where that gets you.

I'd rather talk about romantic restaurants in the area and the romantic chocolate desserts that can warm the coldest cockles of one's heart. And here, in the middle of the winter, most of us would appreciate an occasional cockle warming. Check out a few of our favorite romantic dining destinations and their chocolate creations.

County Seat Restaurant and Gathering Place

3883 Old Buckingham Road; 804-598-5000

Pay a visit to one of this hot spot's weekly live music performances and you'll discover that there's plenty of romance to be found on the County Seat dance floor and February 14 will be no exception when the Taters take to the stage for their Valentine's Day Concert. If you're familiar with the Taters, you know they can slide through an eclectic mix of roots rock, pop, country, and, yes, even a stirring love song, without missing a beat. Evidently, that's what they have in mind for the night. Craig Evans who helped form the band over 30 years ago says, "We'll try to pull out as many romantic ones as we can, but it will no doubt be mixed in with songs of all kinds!"



Enjoy the County Seat's
delicious cakes and pies.

To add to the romance, Tracy Cifers, owner of the County Seat, says, "We'll have our buffet plus some Valentine's Day dinner specials. That's all well and good, but will there be chocolate?"

Cakes and pies are a County Seat specialty. Tracy sent me a few mages of some of the chocolate delights to come out of their kitchen. Feast your eyes. That's some enchanted evening planned

Outside the county, here are a couple of other spots where love and chocolate will come together beautifully.

Lola's Farmhouse Bistro

1840 Manakin Road, Manakin Sabot; 804-784-2000



Built in 1865, this old farmhouse turned restaurant offers an intimate setting for romantic dining. A special valentine's day menu is planned. Chocolate lovers will want to save room for either Lola's Messy Brownie with ice cream or their Chocolate Sundae with Cotton Candy.

And if you really want to create a special evening for that special someone, reserve one of their heated igloos and dine on the patio.

Half Way House Restaurant

10301 Route 1, Richmond; 804-275-1760

For over 250 years the Half Way House has been synonymous with special occasions and romance. Rick Young who owns this historic restaurant with his wife Sue remarks, "From the flickering of candle-light and fresh flowers on your table to the glowing embers of the fireplaces, the Half Way House is the perfect place for your special occasion." Chocolate lovers will want to try the Chocolate Truffle Cake and on Valentine's Day, there'll be complimentary strawberries dipped in French dark chocolate.



Enjoy the scrumptious Chocolate Truffle Cake
at Half Way House.

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★★★★★

I was skeptical about a membership, but **after my son's first class I was sure this was a great idea**. The kids have such a **sense of pride** figuring things out from the mental to the physical challenges, **the coaches are so involved**, and as a parent it was awesome **helping my kiddo overcome challenges**.

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From the Pantry

Triple Chocolate Brownies

Oh, the possibilities! Who doesn't enjoy a decadent chocolate dessert or beverage? Chocolate as we know it first appeared in the 19th century and we have been enjoying it ever since. This triple chocolate brownie recipe (using cocoa powder, milk chocolate, and dark chocolate) topped with a quick and easy chocolate sauce is sweet and rich and goes great with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. *Cindy*

BROWNIES

INGREDIENTS:

- ¾ cup butter, melted
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- ¾ cup cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ cup + 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- ½ cup milk chocolate chips
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Whisk together melted butter and both sugars in a large mixing bowl, whisking until it resembles a paste. Add eggs and vanilla and whisk again. Add cocoa powder, salt, and flour to bowl and mix until just combined. Stir in all chocolate. Pour the batter into a greased 8x8 pan and cook for 30-40 minutes.



CHOCOLATE SAUCE

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup milk
- 2/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 ½ cup sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 4 tbsp butter
- 2 tsp vanilla

DIRECTIONS:

Combine milk, cocoa, sugar, and salt in a saucepan. Boil for one minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add butter and vanilla. Pour over brownies while still warm. Let brownies and chocolate cool, then enjoy!

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

LOVE YOUR TATERS (JUST DON'T EAT THEM)

Our favorites (yes, we do play favorites) the **Taters** return to the stage at the **County Seat Restaurant and Gathering Place** for their special Valentine's concert. Make reservations now. (TheCountySeat.com)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 FROM 5:30 TO 9 P.M.

CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE

Members and non-members, alike, are invited to The **Goochland County Chamber of Commerce Annual Celebration** at the **Estate at River Run**. In addition to an excellent meal in a beautiful, elegant James River mansion, The Goochland Chamber will be presenting the winners of the Chamber Excellence Awards. (GoochlandChamber.org)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20 @ 7 P.M.

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