

December Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

One of the joys of living in Florida is reaping our own bountiful harvest in the winter. It starts with our citrus that, now thanks to the cooler temperatures, are turning to their more familiar colors. Grapefruit and pummelo are becoming golden and oranges, tangelos and tangerines are increasingly becoming orange. Of course, the ever bearing citrus fruits, calamondin, lemon, lime and key lime, just keep blooming and setting fruit all year regardless of the weather.

With the termination of the citrus eradication program and the introduction of the new fatal disease, citrus greening, alternatives to citrus are being encouraged in your future dooryard fruit installations. Consideration should be given to other trees bearing fruit now, such as avocado, bananas, black sapote, cherimoya, coconut, kumquat papaya, star fruit and sugar apple.

One can achieve winter color during the holidays with other plants besides poinsettias. Landscape plants sparkling with red during this festive season are Bougainvillea, Chinese hat plant, Kalanchoe, Turks cap, and crown of thorns.

Amid this season of color and festivals, the Florida House Learning Center is hosting an open house, "Casa Abierta," for all of our Hispanic residents and visitors. The festivities will include live Latino music and food as well as piñatas and door prizes. The emphasis is on a healthy environment in our home and landscape, as well as water and energy conservation and sustainability. The Florida House les invita a aprender más sobre los conceptos de sustentamiento: conservación de agua y energía, un ambiente saludable en el hogar, jardinería, y mucho más. Everyone is welcome!

Gardening activities:

- Root prune trees and large shrubs for transplanting in January or February.
- Prune only temperate plants now. Wait until the end of February or first of March to prune more cold sensitive plants.
- Plant cold tolerant annual flowers such as alyssum, dusty miller, pansies and snapdragons.
- Plant cool weather vegetables to increase your harvest. Plant them in containers if your space is limited.
- Lightly fertilize vegetables and flowers monthly unless using a slow-release fertilizer.
- Reduce watering during the winter months. Watering every two weeks instead of weekly is usually sufficient for turf, trees and shrubs. Flowers and vegetables will need more frequent irrigation.
- Mulch to conserve moisture around your plants, but leave some air space at the base of the plants.

Upcoming educational class:

You may now register for classes on-line at our website:

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call the number listed below.

- “Citrus” at Shamrock Park, December 7 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.

Planting guide

Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, dill, eggplant, endive, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, peas, parsley, pepper, radish, rutabaga, sage, spinach, squash, strawberries, Swiss chard, thyme, tomato and turnips.

Annuals: Begonia, Calendula, foxglove, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, ornamental cabbage and kale, petunia, phlox, Salvia, statice, strawflower, and Verbena.

Perennials: African iris, aster, blue daze, blue sage, Buddleia, bush daisy, candytuft, Dianthus, Gerbera daisy, Pentas, Salvia, Scabiosa, Shasta daisy, Verbena and Viola.

Blooming plants: Allamanda, Bauhinia vine, bottlebrush, Cape honeysuckle, Cassia, Jatropa, lion’s ear, Mexican flame vine, Mexican sunflower, orchid tree, Philippine violet, pipevine, red and yellow shrimp plants, rose, silver trumpet tree, Thunbergia, and Tibouchina.

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park. The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-Noon and 1-4:00 pm (861-5000). We have satellite service at the **Downtown Farmer’s Market** every second Saturday of the month to answer your questions.

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