

## December in the Tallahassee Garden



*Photo to be credited to Steve and Becky, pbase.com: Violas*

*Katherine LaRosa is a Master Gardener Volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County ,  
<http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>*

**S**ince October and November were so dry it will be especially important this month to keep valuable landscape trees and shrubs well-watered. Water especially well before a predicted freeze to minimize additional stress to the plants.

**Shrubs and Trees:** Check citrus, hollies, gardenias, and camellias for signs of mites, aphids, and scale. If needed, apply horticultural oil spray to kill over-wintering pests. Hardy trees and shrubs can be planted this month. Water them carefully. Don't let them dry out but don't keep the soil too wet either. Allow woody shrubs to enter dormancy by withholding fertilizers. Tender shrubs and trees damaged by a freeze should not be cut back immediately. Wait until early spring to see how far down the stems the damage goes, then prune. Many landscape trees and shrubs have foliage and berries which can be cut for holiday decorations including magnolias, hollies, loquat, rosemary, aucuba, pyracantha and junipers. Don't just cut willy-nilly. Remember the plant is also being pruned. Try to shape the plants as you cut.

**Annuals and Perennials:** Plant cool-season bedding plants like dianthus, pansies, violas, snapdragons, alyssum, digitalis (foxglove) and petunias. Feed winter blooming annuals every four to six weeks with a light application of a fertilizer containing 50% of its nitrogen in a slow-release form. Plant hardy perennials including hosta, delphinium, rudbeckia, and Shasta daisy. Clean up the garden, pull up spent annuals and renew the mulch. Finish dividing and transplanting daylilies, mondo grass, ajuga, and liriope. Plant bare root roses now. When purchasing a grafted rose select one which has been grafted on Fortuniana rootstock for best results. Now is your last chance to sow seeds of wildflowers and spring blooming annuals like larkspur, bachelor buttons, sweet peas, sweet alyssum, and poppies.

**Bulbs, Corms and Tubers:** Finish planting spring blooming bulbs as soon as possible, including narcissus, snowflakes (leucojum) , anemones and ranunculus. Plant pre-cooled tulips and hyacinths before December

December in the

15th. If your soil has poor drainage, plant bulbs in containers. Several different types can be grouped in one pot.

Vegetables, Herbs and Fruit: Continue planting cool season vegetables including cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, radishes, carrots, cauliflower, kohlrabi, mustard, onions and turnips. Plant herbs which do well in winter, including parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, and lavender.

Lawn care: Lawns don't need much attention now other than removing leaves and pine needles. Don't let them accumulate and smother the lawn grass. Either mow them and leave them on the lawn to provide nutrients or use them elsewhere as mulch. If you plan to over-seed your lawn with winter rye this month, buy rye grass seed sold especially for lawns, not for pastures.

Houseplants: Before bringing houseplants inside, clean the outside of the pot and the soil surface. Give the plants a shower with the hose and treat for insects or disease. Poinsettias used for holiday decoration can be planted outside in the spring in a location that is sheltered from the coldest weather such as on the south side of your house.

###

**Return to [Monthly & Seasonal Articles](#).**