November in the Tallahassee Garden

Photo by David W. Marshall, Leon County UF-IFAS Extension: Cuphea micropetala is in bloom now.

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Right plant, Right place

Fall blooming perennials such as cigar flower (*Cuphea micropetala*), Mexican sage (*Salvia leucantha*), pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*), and firespike (*Odontonema strictum*) add great color to the fall garden. The cigar flower has tubular orange and yellow flowers. The Mexican sage has spikes of purple and white and pineapple sage is a brilliant red. Firespike, as its name indicates, has red flowers. Winter-hardy annuals to plant this month are pansies, snapdragons, petunias, sweet alyssum, nemesia, diascia, and dianthus. Plant in a sunny spot for color thorough early spring. Plant hollies, pyracantha, and American beautyberry this month, and enjoy long-lasting color from their berries.

Plant camellias this month for winter color. But you may want to wait until they’re in bloom to purchase them so as to be certain that you’ll get the flower color you want. They need well-drained soil and light shade, making them a good choice as an understory planting under high trees like pines. The only camellia pruning you should do now is to remove unruly branches.

For spring color, sow seeds of bachelor buttons, California poppies, larkspur, and sweet peas this month. Sow on bare, prepared soil and cover very lightly with more soil. A little effort now will pay big dividends in the spring. Spring wildflower seeds may be planted now as well. Consider gaillardia, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, and coreopsis. Bulbs that may be planted this month for spring bloom include daffodils, narcissus, Dutch iris, anemones and ranunculus.
November is a good month to plant all shrubs and trees. If you are looking for colorful fall foliage, consider crape myrtles, Florida maple, Japanese maple, red maple, Bradford pear, Shumard oak and ginko. Plant shrubs now to give roots a chance to become established before hot weather returns.

Mustard, shallots, cabbage, spinach, collards, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli can be planted this month. Herbs to plant include sage, lavender, rosemary, thyme and parsley. They prefer the drier, cooler weather of winter; however, they will need protection during severe cold spells. November is the best month to plant strawberries. They will fruit in the spring.

Lawns are entering their dormant phase, so you will probably only need to mow once a month until spring. This removes tree leaves from the grass and helps prevent weeds from going to seed. If you are having difficulty growing grass in shadier sections of your yard, consider a mulch bed under trees or a groundcover like Mondo grass or liriope.

Water

Water new plants frequently during dry weather until they are established. Water new trees and shrubs at least every three days during the first month. Once the plants become better established and cold weather sets in, watering annuals twice a week and trees, shrubs and perennials once a week should be sufficient. Keep spring flower seed beds moist until the seeds germinate.

Fertilizer

Fertilize annuals, herbs and vegetables lightly once a month with a slow release plant food such as 15-0-15. Wait until late February or March to fertilize newly planted shrubs and trees. If you had lots of winter weeds in your lawn last year, you may want to apply a pre-emergent herbicide now. Be sure to follow label directions carefully and apply before mid-November.

Mulch

As always, it is important to keep your beds well mulched. This will keep roots warmer in winter, will prevent evaporation of moisture and discourage weed growth. Apply no less than two inches and no more than four inches of mulch. The leaves and pine straw that fall from trees in your yard make great mulch materials. Rake them into beds or use your mower to chop and blow them. If you need to buy mulch, try to avoid cypress mulch in favor of pine straw or pine bark mulch. Cypress trees are over-harvested for sale as mulch.
Wildlife

Continue to feed songbirds throughout the winter. Many species overwinter here. Keep birdbaths clean and filled.

Cooler temperatures make working in the garden this month feel more like playing in the garden! Get out there and have fun!

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