November in the Tallahassee Garden

Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Garlic vine is one of a number of fall-blooming perennials that can be planted now.

Elizabeth Schmidt is a Master Gardener volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County, http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu

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Finally! Cool weather is here. Time to get out those grandiose gardening plans that fell by the wayside during the dog days of summer.

Right Plant, Right Place
November is an excellent time to begin planting trees and shrubs. For fall foliage color consider planting a red maple (Acer rubrum). Foliage colors range from orange to deep red. Red maples are fast growing, do well in a poorly-drained site and are suited for most soil types except deep sands. Cool weather allows them to develop an extensive root system before the next growing season. Other choices for great fall color include dogwood, crape myrtles, hawthorn, Bradford pear, Shumard oak, hickory, and sweetgum. Plant hollies, pyracantha, and American beautyberry this month for their brilliantly colored berries. For great winter color, plant camellias now. They need well-drained soil and light shade.

Fall-blooming perennials to plant in November include pineapple sage (Salvia elegans), Mexican bush sage (Salvia leucantha), cigar flower (Cuphea micropetala), firespike (Odontonema strictum), Philippine violet (Barleria cristata), swamp sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius), and garlic vine (Cydista aequinoctialis). All prefer a sunny location except Philippine violet, which needs protection from the hot afternoon sun.

Plant winter annuals like nemesia, diascia, Flambe yellow chrysocephalum, pansies, sweet alyssum, petunias, dianthus, and violas in a sunny spot. These selections will flower from now until late spring.
For great spring blooms sow seeds of larkspur, bachelor buttons, sweet peas and California poppies in full sun. Spring wildflower seeds may also be planted in full sun this month. Try rudbeckia, gellardia, purple coneflower and coreopsis.

Spring-flowering bulbs that may be planted in a sunny area are daffodils, narcissus, dutch iris, ranunculus and anemones.

Vegetables to plant this month are mustard greens, kale, collard greens, cabbage, spinach, brussel sprouts and broccolli. Strawberries should be planted this month for spring fruit. Herbs that prefer cool weather are sage, lavender, rosemary, cilantro and thyme. Protect them from very cold temperatures. Plant all of these vegetables, fruits and herbs in full sun.

In areas of heavy shade where grass is difficult to grow, consider planting a ground cover like mondo grass or ferns.

Water
Water newly planted annuals and herbs every other day until established then twice a week during dry weather. Newly planted shrubs, trees and perennials should be watered twice a week until established.

Fertilizer
Fertilize pansies, herbs and vegetables lightly once per month with an all-purpose 15-0-15 product. Do not fertilize newly planted shrubs and trees until spring. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to your lawn early this month if winter weeds were a problem last year. Follow label directions carefully.

Mulch
Keep flower beds and areas around trees well-mulched in order to discourage weeds and prevent evaporation of moisture from the soil. Don’t forget to pull the mulch an inch or two away from the stems of plants and trunks of trees to prevent rot.

Maintenance
November is the time to divide clumping perennials like phlox, iris, hostas and day lilies. Set divided plants back into the soil at their original depth, then mulch and water. Use fallen pine needles or hardwood leaves as mulch. Excess leaves can be chopped up with your lawn mower and placed in flower beds at a depth of two to four inches. Lawns are entering their dormant phase, but continue to mow once per month to prevent weeds from going to seed and to remove lawn debris and leaves.
Wildlife

Continue to replenish bird feeders and birdbaths. Do not remove hummingbird feeders until you are sure that they have left the area, as many choose to overwinter here. Clean abandoned bird houses and boxes so they are ready for spring.

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