

January in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: For winter color, try 'Citrona' yellow or orange Erysimum.

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Plant

This year Arbor Day in Tallahassee will be celebrated on Saturday, January 22 with a tree planting at Lafayette Park at 9:00 a.m. Look for more details in this gardening column later this month.

January is an excellent time to plant new trees in your landscape. Consider a native species like southern magnolia, live oak, bald or pond cypress, or even smaller trees like possum haw. Hollies are a good choice for winter color with their red berries and glossy foliage. If you would like a flowering tree, try dogwood, redbud, or fringe trees. Don't forget to consider the size of the tree at maturity when choosing a planting site.

January is the best month to plant deciduous fruit trees. This will give them some time for root development before warm temperatures arrive. Choose a site that gets at least six hours of sun per day.

Plant trees a little higher than the surrounding ground to allow for settling. Water three times per week for the first six weeks, then twice per week thereafter. You'll need to water more often when temperatures warm up. It takes trees at least a year to become established.

Select and plant camellias this month. They're in bloom so you can be sure to get the color and cultivar that you want. Also, selections in nurseries are best this time of year. Camellias prefer

part sun to part shade, so a spot that receives dappled sun all day is perfect. Soil should be well-drained and slightly acidic.

If you wish to plant a bare-root rose, you must get it done now through February. Container-grown roses can be planted year-round. Pick a sunny site with well-drained soil.

Bulbs to plant now include agapanthus, crinum and gloriosa lily. Cover with a protective layer of mulch after planting.

Continue to plant pansies, violas, petunias, dianthus, erysimum, nemesias, diascia, and snapdragons as bedding plants. Plant in a sunny area for optimal blooming.

Continue to plant cool season vegetables and herbs, including beets, cabbage, turnips, Swiss chard, lettuce, broccoli and cilantro.

Maintenance

Now is a good time to prune shrubs to improve form. But avoid pruning spring blooming shrubs and trees now because they have already set their flower buds. Do not over prune or top crape myrtles. Remove only crossing or rubbing branches and bottom shoots. Seed pods and small twiggy growth may be removed if desired, but it is not necessary. Severe pruning will deform these plants and cause excessive growth at the base of the plant and a witches-broom effect at each pruning site. Bear in mind that crepe myrtles are some of the most beautiful sculptures in the winter landscape, if they are pruned properly. Nothing is uglier than one that has been reduced to stumps.

Peaches, plums and nectarines need to be pruned this month or next. Pruning allows the fruit to receive more light, keeps the fruit within reach and stimulates new growth.

Freezing temperatures and frost are likely this month and next. Any tender plants should be covered on very cold nights to minimize cold damage. If you are covering plants with plastic, do not let plastic touch foliage or it will be damaged. Old sheets and blankets are a better option.

Mow your lawn occasionally to keep weeds from going to seed and to remove fallen leaves. Use the mower to blow the leaves into beds where they will serve as mulch.

Vegetables, herbs, and annuals should be lightly fertilized once per month.

To control insect pests on citrus, deciduous fruit trees, camellias and shrubs, spray with a horticultural oil now while they are dormant.

January is a time for planning and planting, enjoy the break from endless weeding!

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