

11-19-2020 December Gardening Calendar

December is an important time for the winter vegetable garden. Early in the month there is time to plant spinach transplants, one of the most popular vegetables. Plant spinach 12 to 18 inches apart in the garden bed that has been prepared by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer into every 100 sq. ft. of garden bed. It is also time to plant onion transplants. You can choose between mild versions of red, yellow, and white onions. Plant them close together so that the plants in between can be utilized as green onions as you wait for the bulbs to mature in May. The first broccoli should be ready to harvest early in the month if it was not ready in November. Greens such as kale, chard, and collards can also be harvested. Stay alert for the presence of cabbage loopers. Be ready to apply a Bt product at the first sign of caterpillar feeding on the foliage.

If we have not had a freeze or too much cold weather the tomatoes are continuing their march to maturity. I recommend that the individual tomatoes be harvested as soon as they show a color change to stay ahead of the interest of the birds and to be ready when the freeze shows up in December. Oftentimes the first freeze is a light one that can be survived if the plants are covered. If you survive the first freeze you may be granted another 3 or 4 weeks of tomato maturing weather.

The wildflower seed should be in place. For something different look for some of the red, white, and blue bluebonnet transplants. They are a treat for your gardening friends that visit.

Cyclamen are not overly sensitive to cold weather but the plants are so expensive and the flower buds do not recover after a hard freeze so it is reasonable to have a piece of Insulate fabric ready to cover them if temps of 30 degrees or less are predicted.

Mexican limes and Meyer lemons are wonderful backyard plants, but they are also sensitive to cold temps. In addition to blankets or other fabric to use as a cover, protect the plants with a heat source such as a mechanic's light or poultry heat lamp. Make sure the light bulbs are not LED technology. The heat produced by old-fashioned bulbs is required. Of course, all the tropical and cold sensitive ornamental plants should be in shelter in December. The list to be protected in shelter includes bougainvillea, oriental hibiscus, plumeria, and mandevilla.

If the zinnias and other warm weather annuals have survived November, expect them to be taken out by cold weather in December. There is a long list of cool weather annuals to consider for planting in the month, including snapdragons, stock, dianthus, alyssum, ornamental cabbage, calendula, primula, cyclamen, and pansies. The month is also a good time to plant shade trees and shrubs.

One of the best strategies to use to care for the winter lawn is to mow it and any weeds that invade every 2 weeks at the same mowing height from the summer. Bermuda, zoysia and buffalo grass will go dormant in a cold winter and do not have to be watered more than once per month. St Augustine is less flexible and should be irrigated every 3 weeks during a dry winter period.