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## December Gardening

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December can be a busy month due to the holidays but, considering the average day-time temperature should be 73 degrees, it is a great time to work outside. If you are looking for an excuse to get outside and enjoy the weather here are some ideas of things to do around the yard.

- \* Bring orchids inside if the temperatures are forecasted to get down to 50 degrees or lower.
- \* Since winter is just starting, make your plan now for what plants will need protection if a freeze is forecasted. Figure out what blankets and quilts will be used over which plants!
- \* You can still plant new trees and shrubs.
- \* If you have any leaves in your yard, rake them up and put them in your compost pile or use them as mulch under your trees and shrubs.
- \* Flowers which can be planted in December include; alyssum, dianthus, pansy, snapdragon, viola, stock, petunia, sweet peas and flowering kale.
- \* Some herbs that can be planted are; garlic chives, chives, lemon grass (plant this in a large pot), parsley, rosemary, Mexican tarragon, fennel, mint, thyme, lemon balm, Greek oregano, salad burnet, lavenders, chervil and sage.
- \* Plant some bulbs like African iris (*Morea*), amaryllis, anemones, crinum, day lily (*Hemerocallis*), society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*), spider lilies, rain lilies (*Zephyranthes*), *Agapanthus*, Astec lily (*Sprekelia*), kaffir lily (*Clivia*), calla (*Zantedeschia*), hurricane lily (*Lycoris*), *Tritonia*, *Watsonia*, Elephant ears (*Alocasia*, *Colocasia*, *Xanthosoma*) and narcissus.
- \* The shorter days and cooler temperatures of December will allow the grass to get by with less water now. One good deep watering (3/4 of an inch) a week may be all your lawn will need.
- \* Now that the grass isn't growing as fast, you may be able to get by with only mowing every other week.
- \* Mow high enough to maintain proper turf height. (3-4 inches for St. Augustine & Bahia and 3/4 - 1 1/2 inches for Bermuda.)
- \* Plant new fruit trees and shrubs (if you have the room!)

\* Fertilize the vegetable garden every three to four weeks. For vegetables that produce a fruit such as tomatoes, cucumbers, egg plant, etc. use a fertilizer with lower Nitrogen (the first of the three numbers on the bag) then Phosphorous (the second number.)

\* Remove banana plants that have fruited to make room for new plants.

\* Don't forget to give your citrus trees an inch of water every 7-10 days if we don't get any rain.

\* Vegetables that can be planted in December include; beets; broccoli; cabbage; carrots; cauliflower; celery; Chinese cabbage; collards; lettuce; mustard; onions - short-day bulbing varieties, bunching & multipliers; English peas; radishes.

\* Vegetable seeds that can be sown in December for transplanting in January are: beets; broccoli; cabbage; cauliflower; celery; Chinese cabbage; collards eggplant; endive/escarole; lettuce; mustard; onions - bunching & multipliers; English peas; turnips; peppers - sweet & hot; tomatoes; watermelon.