

THINGS TO DO LIST FOR DECEMBER 2017

PRUNING – If you prune now you could stimulate growth that could be damaged by a cold snap. Do not prune spring flowering shrubs. Mild temperatures won't hold for too much longer. Normally by Christmas temperatures start to drop. Plants should be allowed to become dormant, so they are ready for frost. Pick up any diseased leaves and old fruit.

TROPICAL PLANTS - The cold can cause older leaves to drop off. In case of frost, bring your orchids and container plants inside. I water before it gets to be 32 degrees to keep the heat in the ground. During freezing temperatures, be prepared to cover your plants with cloth sheets or quilts, not plastic. Some plants can be placed in the bushes out of the north wind. Also water as plants begin to recover from the freeze. Caladiums are dormant now so, cut down on the water. Root rot can become a problem with cactus, succulents and many annuals when it is too wet. Compost can be put on the beds at this time to keep the heat and moisture in, and weeds down. The secret of success lies in good soil. Pests are less active this month; scale can be scraped or washed off. Caterpillars are the immature stages of moths and butterflies. Look for them on daturas, tomatoes, cabbage, collards, cauliflower and broccoli. Pick them off by hand. Time released fertilizer can be put on roses and gardenias now. Winter begins on December 21, 2017.

PROPAGATION –Sometimes it is best left till warmer weather. Cuttings can sit in wet soil and rot this time of year. Never hurts to try your luck. You can start some cuttings of plants in a glass of water, on window sill. Dip in fungicide and place in a soilless mix, in a 4 inch pot. When the roots show at the bottom of the pot, place in a larger pot with Miracle Gro Potting Mix or in the ground. “You can only receive that which an effort is made.”

PLANTING – If you purchase the right plants, your garden can give you the site of birds and butterflies, fruit and flowers with the smell of perfume. Buy plants like, herbs and vegetables, alyssum, calendula, coontie, firebush, gaillardia, petunias, nasturtiums, milkweed, pansies, snapdragons, torenia, marigold, verbena and begonias. Spoil yourself and buy something you never had before. There is no such thing as garden failures, only its lessons. Keep mulch away from the trunks of trees and bushes. Seeds, bulbs and onion sets can usually be planted now.

VEGETABLES - Most vegetables and herbs need 6 - 8 hours of sun a day. Good idea to plant in pots this year, so you can move them around. I like recycled 15 gallon black pots. Earth boxes might be good to try if you haven't had success with your veg. plants. Find someone that is growing Everglades' tomatoes and get some seed to start. They are not sold in the stores. Rain or shine is not a problem for this plant to produce. It also reseeds itself. Plant the tallest veg. plants on the north side of the garden, and have maximum sun and protection from wind chill. PH range is between 5.8 and 6.5. Hollywood has 7.5 PH or higher with mostly micro nutrient deficiencies. Do not compost your weeds your pile does not get hot enough to destroy the seeds .A good tomato isn't cheap, and a cheap tomato isn't good. Big box store plants could have diseases already, bacterial spots and growth retardants on them. Best to plant from seeds.

FRUIT IN SEASON - Banana, citrus, sapote, papaya, sapodilla, pineapple, roselle, mulberry, avocado, and carambola. Growing your own fruit is like printing money. It is a good idea to keep a notebook, journal or calendar to remind you what happens each month in your garden. I like to make a note of when I trim certain plants. It is good to put the receipts of the plants in a file so you can refer to the name, date, when and where you purchased them.

WATERING – Adjust irrigation based on the rainfall. Water in the early morning, plants do not like to go to bed with *wet* feet. Monitor your plants in the morning for signs of wilting, then water. Some plants like rain or well water better than city water. Some wells can contain salt. Adjust sprinklers so they don't hit the base of your trees.

BLOOMING – Bougainvillea, geiger tree, mussaenda , allamanda, orchid, willow in the Everglades, cassias, ixora, shrimp plant, Christmas cactus, kalanchoe, penta, periwinkle, marigold, impatiens, petunia, geranium, pansy, wax begonia, dragonwing, begonia, blue daze, angel trumpet, Florida hydrangea, snapdragon, buttercup, crossandra, crown-of-thorns, ginger, desert rose, heliconia, ruellia, hibiscus, thryallis, bird of paradise, rose, golden senna, West Indian shower, golden rain tree, salvia, firespike, scarlet red cloak, Hong Kong orchid, turk's cap, firebush, porterweed, torenia, lantana, crinum lily, chenille, melampodium, garlic vine, alder, plumbago and clerodendrum.