

## **THINGS TO DO LIST FOR DECEMBER 2018**

**PRUNING** – If you prune now you will stimulate growth that can be damaged by a cold snap. Do not prune shrubs that flower in spring. Cut off old blooms. Plants should be allowed to become dormant so they are ready for the cold. Cut off dead branches and pick up any diseased leaves and old fruit that are on the ground.

**TROPICAL PLANTS** - The cold can cause older leaves to drop off. In case of frost, bring 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. Water with the sun as plants begin to recover from the freeze. Caladiums are dormant now so reduce watering. Root rot can become a problem with cacti, succulents, bulbs and many annuals when it is too wet. Compost and mulch can be put on the beds at this time to keep the heat and moisture in and the weeds down. The secret of success lies in good soil. I have found white fly in my garden 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 release fertilizer can be put on roses and gardenias. Winter begins on 12-21-18.

**PROPAGATION** – Sometimes it is best left until warmer weather. Cuttings can sit in wet soil and rot this time of year. It never hurts to try your luck though. You can root some cuttings in a glass of water on the window sill or dip the ends in fungicide and place them in soilless mix in a 4 inch pot. When the roots show at the bottom of the pot, transplant them in a pot that is 2 inches larger with Miracle Gro Potting Mix or put them in the ground.

**PLANTING** – If you purchase the right plants, your garden can provide fruit, perfume from flowers, and sightings of birds and butterflies. Spoil yourself and buy something you've never had before. There is no such thing as garden failures, only lessons. Keep mulch 12 inches away from the trunks of trees and bushes. Seeds, bulbs and onion sets can be planted now. Plant native trees and plants around your yard perimeter for protection from high winds.

**VEGETABLES** - Most vegetables and herbs need 6 - 8 hours of sun a day. Plant them in large pots so you can move them around. I like recycled 15 gallon black pots. Try earth boxes and large bags if you haven't had success with your veg. plants. Find someone who is growing Everglades tomatoes and ask for some tomatoes. Rain or shine is not a problem for this plant to produce, just squeeze seeds into the soil. It also reseeds itself. Plant the tallest veg. plants on the north side of the garden, to have maximum sun and protection from the wind. PH range is best 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. Throw them in the garbage. A good tomato isn't cheap, and a cheap tomato isn't good. Look closely at big box store plants they could have diseases already like bacterial spots. Plant seeds if you can.

**FRUIT IN SEASON** - Banana, citrus, sapote, papaya, sapodilla, pineapple, roselle, mulberry, avocado, and carambola. Growing your own fruit is like printing money. 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 rainfall. Water in the early morning. Your plants don't like to go to bed with wet feet. If your plants are wilted in the morning, then water. Some plants like rain or well water better than city water. East of I95 wells can contain salt. Adjust sprinklers so they don't hit the base of your trees. If your water pressure is low, take off the sprinkler heads at the end of the lines and blow the algae and dirt out to keep them from clogging.

**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 clarodendrum.

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