

JANUARY

MAINTENANCE

- ⊙ When hard freezes are expected, protect tender plants from potential frost by tenting with burlap, a blanket or Easy Gardener's Plant and Seed Blanket. Be sure to keep the cover off foliage to minimize damage to branch tips and flowers. Cloudcover, a polymer that prevents desiccation during frost, protects plants to about 28°F. Pull potted plants under the eaves of the house and if you expect a big freeze run an extension cord out into your citrus and put a 60 or 70 watt bulb under the cover. Be sure to remove the covers first thing in the morning as temperatures rise.
- ⊙ If you haven't done so already, move your containerized tender and tropical plants close to the house during the cold months.
- ⊙ Apply dormant spray to deciduous trees and shrubs if aphids, scale or whiteflies have been a problem in previous seasons.
- ⊙ Apply tri-basic copper sulfate or lime sulfur for peach leaf curl now into mid- February.
- ⊙ Harvest citrus. 'Eureka' lemon, mandarins, 'Washington' navel orange, and several other citrus trees are producing now, so pick while fruit is ripe. If you have more than you can use, we at Botany gladly collect surplus harvest and distribute it to families who will make good use of it or donate the excess to a food bank (for a list, visit cafoodbanks.org). You can also contact the non-profit [Village Harvest](http://VillageHarvest.org) (888/378-4841) to send a team of trained and equipped volunteers to harvest and donate the fruit for you.
- ⊙ Pick up fallen fruit, remove dried fruit on trees ("mummies"), and rake leaves, placing all debris in the trash. Do not compost! Fruits and leaves may harbor overwintering insect pests and fungi. Removing both decreases the incidence and proliferation of pests and diseases the next growing season.
- ⊙ To keep fruit and shade trees, grapes, and berries shapely, prune them while they're dormant. It is advisable to use pruning shears to make cuts up to ¾ inch in diameter, loppers for cuts ¾ to 1 inch in diameter, and a pruning saw for branches more than 1 inch in diameter.
- ⊙ Prune evergreen perennials such as Penstemon, Chrysanthemums, lavender and Salvias now, if you haven't already. If they're still in color, you can wait to cut back absolutely no later than Valentine's Day. Pruning your evergreens keeps them compact and dense.

New growth makes the plant appear fresher. DO NOT prune lavender all the way back into wood with no leaves. It will not recover.

- ⊙ Ornamental grasses should have been cut back by now. Some gardeners appreciate the ornamental effect of the dried seed heads through the winter months and those can be cut back as late as Valentine's Day but no later.
- ⊙ Time to prune garden hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*). This species blooms on new growth from one-year old wood -- aim your pruning cuts just above the largest pair of buds on this wood. Hydrangea bushes often need to be thinned out by removing some of the old gnarly stems right to the ground. Each year one-quarter to one-third of the stems should be removed to permit new ones to grow. All stems pencil size or smaller should be removed. If powdery mildew has been a problem during the summer months, spray them with Microcop or Liqui-Cop after pruning as a preventative; and during the summer spray with sulfur if mildew appears.
- ⊙ Wisteria should be pruned before it blooms; cut the new whippy, vegetative growth back to within two buds from the main stem. Be sure to leave the fat, elongated buds that will produce flowers.
- ⊙ Roses should also be pruned now. If you wait until later the plants have often started to sprout out lots of new growth. The main purpose of this pruning is to clear away diseased material. Dead leaves should also be picked up and the ground covered with a fresh dose of mulch to seal in the fungal spores. As much of the introduction of the disease organisms to the plants comes from splashing raindrops, cleanliness matters for the more disease prone roses. Try to refrain from any pesticide or fungicide spraying unless the bugs are just too thick for the plants to survive.
- ⊙ Look for broken and torn branches on trees after storms. Prune to healthy tissue, using heading cuts if parts of branches have broken or torn and removing entire branches if needed. Consulting a simple, informative book such as *Ortho's All About Pruning* will help you determine where to prune and how to make the proper cut. If severe damage is done to older, mature trees, we strongly encourage you to seek the services of a certified arborist. While you may pay more for their work than you would for a noncertified pruner or gardener, you can be assured that the health and longevity of your trees will not be compromised by poor practices such as topping and incorrect pruning cuts.
- ⊙ To intensify the blue or pink coloration of garden hydrangeas, apply aluminum sulphate (for blue) or Oyster shell lime (for pink) in December, January, February, and March. Use oyster shell lime, which contains calcium carbonate, an excellent addition to our soils. Dolomite lime, on the other hand, contains magnesium, of which we already have plenty in our native soils.
- ⊙ As camellias begin blooming, you may notice brown splotching on petal margins of open flowers, partly open flowers and flower buds. These are characteristic symptoms of camellia petal blight, a fungus for which there is no cure. Sanitation is key for reducing symptoms: Remove infected flowers and buds and try to not let infected petals hit the ground. If they do, gather and place them in the trash immediately - do not compost!
- ⊙ Azaela flower blight has similar symptoms as camellia petal blight, but it can be controlled with a fungicide applied before the buds begin to show color. Use Rose Pride (Fuginex) or Garden Disease Control (Daconil).
- ⊙ Consider planting cover crops in unused garden spaces. Cover crops keep soil from compacting during winter rains and add much needed nitrogen to the soil when turned into beds in the spring. Popular cover crops include fava beans, which are also edible,

and strawberry or red clover. Winter Cover Crop Mix, available at garden centers, which includes bell beans, magnus peas and purple vetch is another good selection. You can also plant dwarf snap peas from cell packs about nine inches apart. The peas can be harvested and eaten and still provide all the soil benefits listed.

- ⊙ Clean and service lawnmowers.
- ⊙ To find out how to compost in Santa Clara County contact the Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County at (408) 282-3105 or online at <http://www.mastergardeners.org/scc.html>.
- ⊙ Consider watering indoor plants with 2 tablespoons of vinegar per 1 gallon of water once a month to reduce salt-build-up and to lower pH.
- ⊙ Tune up your house plants a couple of time a year. Wash dust and dirt off the leaves, check for bugs and flush the soil by running one or two quarts of water through the soil.

FERTILIZING

- ⊙ For most plants, fertilizer does little good if it is used now. However, it is a good time to fertilize annuals. A good selection is Master Nursery Rose & Flower Food or, if you prefer organic, use Dr. Earth Rose & Flower Fertilizer. Also you can apply bulb food when bulbs break ground and again when they finish blooming.
- ⊙ As citrus trees are fruiting now, it is also good to fertilize all citrus this month with Master Nursery Citrus Food or for an organic approach use Dr. Earth Fruit Tree Fertilizer.
- ⊙ Spray Peaches and nectarines now with Microcop.
- ⊙ Mulch is always a good thing in the garden. While it has little nutritional value of its own, it provides a habitat for a host of soil organisms which naturally loosen and fertilize your soil. Your plants will be thankful for the tilling as well as the meal!

PEST/ WEED CONTROL

- ⊙
If your roses have had pest problems in the past, and natural control measures have failed, spray roses now with a dormant oil to control overwintering insects such as aphids, mites, and scale.
- ⊙ Check citrus for scale, a sucking insect that usually clusters along fruit stems, new growth and the underside of leaves. If found, spray tree with Malathion and with horticultural oil one week later. Wait two weeks and make another application. Never spray oil more than four times during the growing season. Prune to shape and to remove dead or crossing branches.
- ⊙ Don't forget to apply snail bait (Sluggo) to discourage Slugs and Snails after planting annuals. Watch for slug and snail damage as winter progresses and continue to bait as needed. Slugs and snails are especially abundant and troublesome this time of year, nesting and resting in groundcovers. Baiting now will help minimize extant populations and also minimizes damage in the coming spring. Use Sluggo, safe for pets and people, or Master Nursery Pest-Fighter, available in powder or pellet form.
- ⊙ If an unknown and mysterious creature is eating your sweet peas or Iceland Poppies look for white or gold-crowned sparrows. These little birds will hide in bushes and then dart out to feed on fresh greenery and young vegetables--especially lettuce. If birds are the problem, cover the plants with plastic bird netting until they are about 12 inches tall. After that size, the birds will leave them alone.

PLANTING

- ⊙ Winter annuals can be planted through late February. For shady spots, try English primrose, fairy primrose, *Primula obconica*, Cyclamen, Cineraria, and Violas. For sunnier spots, try pansies, Iceland poppies, stock, snapdragons, Calendula, and flowering kale and cabbage. Violas and primroses also do well in sun during the winter.
- ⊙ Sow seeds of sweet peas for armloads of fragrant spring bloom (protect seeds from birds and slugs).
- ⊙ Try new varieties of California poppy in striking colors such as Dusky Rose, Buttercream and Native Orange.
- ⊙ Gladiolus should be planted four to six inches apart, in a 'cutting garden' at two week intervals to produce a continuous source of cut flowers. Gladioli don't work very well mixed with annuals or perennials.
- ⊙ Next year, if you want to prolong your spring bloom, store bulbs in the refrigerator crisper and plant out through late January. You can also plant your narcissi at different depths (to 8 inches deep) and the deeper ones will come up later each year. Put in transplants of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and lettuce to harvest in early spring. Plant asparagus, artichokes, seed potatoes, onion and garlic transplants.
- ⊙ If you have room for an apple, apricot, peach, or plum tree, buy it bare-root and plant now. Find helpful hints in *The Home Orchard* (University of California, 2007; \$25), which covers everything from planting and care to harvesting and troubleshooting.
- ⊙ Brighten your home with a corsage orchid (*Cattleya*) or moth orchid (*Phalaenopsis*). Both need bright light indoors; cool temperatures prolong bloom. Buy locally, or order orchids by mail from [Rocket Farms](#) in Salinas (877/237-7575) or [Santa Barbara Orchid Estate](#) (800/553-3387).
- ⊙ Of all the types of roses you can buy and plant bare-root now, floribundas are among the most colorful. Many are disease-resistant too; according to Robin Rosenberg, a consulting rosarian for the Santa Clara County Rose Society, these include ivory 'French Lace', snowy white 'Iceberg' and pink-and-cream 'Brilliant Pink Iceberg', red 'Playboy', fragrant deep yellow 'Sunsprite', and orangey red 'Trumpeter'. Visit sccrose.org for more disease-resistant roses.
- ⊙ January marks the last month to plant cool season crops, which should be ready for harvest prior to warmer temperatures in spring. Plant cole crops (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, etc.), lettuce, spinach, cilantro, chard, mustard, peas, beets, turnips, rutabagas, and carrots now through the end of the month.
- ⊙ Continue planting onions and leeks from starts and garlic from cloves.
- ⊙ Plant seed potatoes at any time this month.
- ⊙ Tomatoes, peppers and eggplants can be started indoors or in greenhouses in late January. Wait until February for other summer crops such as squash, melons and corn.

SHOPPING

- ⊙ **Bulbs.** Special varieties of begonias, dahlias, gladiolus, lilies, tuberose, and other summer-blooming bulbs, corms, and tubers are available by mail. Reliable catalogs (free except where noted) include [Brent and Becky's Bulbs](#) (877/661-2852), [Dutch Gardens](#) (888/821-0448), and [McClure & Zimmerman](#) (\$3; 800/883-6998). Local garden centers

have summer-blooming bulbs such as gladioli, calla lilies and dahlias by mid- to late January.

- ⊙ **Seeds.** Order seeds from those tempting catalogs that are piling up. Among our favorite Northern California sources for varieties you can't find in stores is [Bountiful Gardens](#) in Willits (707/459-6410), which offers open-pollinated (nonhybrid) vegetable seeds. And [Redwood City Seed Company](#) (650/325-7333) has about 100 kinds of nonhybrid peppers.
- ⊙ **Bare root plants.** As soon as the nurseries move out the Christmas inventory, they bring in the bare root plants. This the best month to establish bare root plantings, and you will find the best economy for plants in general by buying bareroot. Roses, fruit trees, and fruiting vines are the regulars in the bare root section. Strawberries, rhubarb and artichokes can be found now too.
- ⊙ **Camellias and Azaleas** are coming into bloom now, so this is the time to select your favorites.
- ⊙ Winter's cool and moist conditions assist **conifers** to become established more readily than at other times of the year, so now is the best time to shop for and plant large burlap and ball or containerized conifers.