

Gardening in January

Things are going to start heating up in the garden and landscape this month as we move toward spring. Seed catalogs will be arriving. Make your selections early in order to get the best selection. Remember, we basically have a 12-month growing season here, so make plans and purchase seed for a fall and winter garden. Consider ordering several varieties of green beans, for example, and plant them successively in the spring for variety and a longer harvest with enough seed to also plant in the fall. Work on a landscape and garden plan and map out any changes you are going to be making.

Plant: In the flower garden, early this month plant those tulip bulbs you have been holding in the refrigerator as well as Dutch hyacinth and other spring bulbs.

*Asparagus roots will be showing up in the garden centers this month. Plant dormant, two-year-old roots 5 to 6 inches deep in well-prepared, highly organic soil. Make sure the planting area is free of bermuda and johnson grass and that the area is in a place that will not interfere with other garden activities. Once you plant asparagus, it will be there for generations. It is also extremely difficult to move if you decide it needs to be relocated, so choose your site carefully. Consider the UC-157 variety which was developed for warmer climates as well as various "Jersey" varieties.

*Onions and peas need to be planted toward the end of the month to avoid the late spring heat. When planting onions, leave part of the white area above ground.

*If you plan to start your own bedding plants, keep in mind that most seeds need a soil temperature of 65 to 70 degrees to germinate and lots of light once they sprout. If using grow lights, keep the light within 3 to 4 inches from the top of the plants to keep the young plants from getting spindly trying to reach light that is too far away. Use one warm bulb and one cool bulb. Gently brush over sprouts to help strengthen stems. In late January start tomatoes, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, lettuce, spinach, peppers, and eggplant. You do need to plant new lettuce and spinach seed for a spring crop as the plants you had all winter will want to bolt as soon as the weather warms up.

Prune: Peaches, plums and apples -- remove strongly vertical growth to encourage horizontal branching. Remove unwanted growth from crape myrtles at ground level. "Topping" crape myrtles does not improve their flowering and it ruins their natural form.

Fertilize: Cool season annuals with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Fertilize lawns over-seeded with perennial or annual ryegrass with a high nitrogen fertilizer applied at 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Spray: Fruit trees with dormant oil. For peaches only, apply Copper Soap to prevent "peach leaf curl"

Garden Tip: This would be a good time to have your soil tested before the labs get loaded down with demand in the spring. Get a soil test bag and instructions from the County Extension office.

*Our last average freeze date in this area is March 21, but watch the weather forecasts. Our weather has been pretty unpredictable for the last few years.

*Rake the lawn to get rid of dead growth, stray leaves, and twigs and winter debris. *Remove leaves and winter weeds from borders and beds.

*Add mulch to landscape beds and bare garden soil to help control weeds, retain soil moisture and regulate soil temperature fluctuations. Keep mulch away from the base of plants.

Submit questions to Fannin County Master Gardeners at fanninmastergardener@gmail.com.

Another helpful site is <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/>

686 words

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