

November in Your Garden

Guess what, you can STILL plant vegetables. Look for seedlings of kale, chard, mustard greens, leeks, and spinach are nutritious and can grow on your patio in a container all winter. Use them by trimming the outer leaves for your dinner. Need some color around your front door? You can still plant seedlings of pansies and violas, cyclamen, and primulas.

If you have a sprinkler system, turn down the settings, hoping for winter rain, but keep an eye out for dryness around your plants. To be safe, clean up from summer around your favorite plants, wet the ground, put down a fresh layer of mulch to hold in the moisture. Applying new mulch will reduce evaporation, slow weed growth, and encourage earthworm activity. For acid-loving plants, pine needles or peat moss is preferred mulch. Finish planting and feeding your bulbs. Get ready for snails and slugs in your garden by spreading very modest amounts of Super Sluggo, their favorite food. Hopefully they won't be back for seconds!

After leaves from your fruit trees drop, spray your peach and nectarine trees with lime sulfur, an organically acceptable fungicide, to control peach leaf curl. Cover the branches, stems, and trunk.

Dig up your dahlias before the rain comes. Older dahlias become crowded and do not bloom well. First trim the stalks six inches from the ground. Then wait a few weeks, allowing the plant to go into dormancy. Next, lift the entire clump by digging an inch out from the whole mess. Don't lift the clump by the stem for fear of breaking its little neck. You can set them on the driveway and hose them off. Next divide them by identifying the eye in the neck of the tuber, then dust them with a light amount of sulfur, label them with rubber bands that can be written on, and tuck them in for the winter, storing them in peat moss, saw dust from the lumber yard, or mulch. Check them once in a while to be certain that they don't get soggy.

I stop feeding house plants by Thanksgiving, and then give them some tender, loving care, like fresh soil and light fertilizer, around Valentine's Day.

Try forcing paper whites. Crowd the bulbs together, pointed end up, on a bed of pea gravel in a shallow glass dish, 3-4 inches deep. Add another layer of gravel to fill in any gaps and cover the bulbs up to their shoulders. Add water so that the level just reaches the base of the bulbs. Allowing the bottom of the bulb to sit in water will stimulate growth, but covering the entire bulb with water could cause it to rot. Store the container in low light and keep the bulbs cool, at about 65 degrees F. Check the bulbs daily to see if they need more water. When you see roots developing, move the container to a bright window. Do not let them get too warm or they'll grow leggy. Once the plants flower, they will last longer if moved out of direct sunlight. If they start drooping, replace the water with 14 parts water to one part rubbing alcohol!! Use the alcohol solution for future watering.

