

December in Your Garden:

First of all, winter officially starts on December 21st, but your area may get frost even before that. Do you have gardenias, hibiscus, potato vine. Those in pots should be moved to a more sheltered location like closer to your house or onto a more protected deck during frosty nights. It also works to throw a frost blanket or sheet over them, as long as you carefully remove the blankie in the morning to help them recover from the shock of cold. The delicate plants are better protected outdoors, instead of moving them to the garage or indoors, which could give them too much warmth.

I use a moisture meter if we have no rain for a spell. Be vigilant that plants get the moisture they need to survive our unpredictable weather. Especially check plants and containers growing under eaves, where rain cannot reach. Starting in December, it's a good time to prune fruit trees. Is your fruit tree too tall? Pick a height and stick to it by lopping and topping the branches that shoot straight up. Also dormant spray during our short winter for peach leaf curl and codling moth in apple, pear, and quince trees, as well as roses. Remember to spray the ground beneath the drip line. Rake up and destroy any fallen leaves and fruit. I plan to prune my hydrangeas in December, to remove any dead wood and too improve the shape of the bushes. I like more flowers so I prune somewhat more drastically than others would prune.

Do you need to replace or add to your rose collection? Bare root roses and fruit trees are in stock at the nurseries. The selection is usually huge, and bare root makes roses and

fruit trees much cheaper than those in containers. Soak the roots in a bucket of water for up to 24 hours to replenish lost moisture before planting them.

Camellia sasanqua and early flowering *C. japonica* should be blooming now. *C. sasanqua* are a great choice for winter color, either in container or as a color spot for winter cheer. They tolerate more sun than *C. japonicas*. And don't forget cyclamen and hellebores to brighten the winter days.

Cyclamen belong in a sunnier location than hellebores, that need partial to deep shade.

Bored with no plants to talk to? Get those pruning clippers, shears, hoes, shovels sharpened. Palo Alto Hardware has a sharpener who comes to the store on a regular basis. Drop off your tools and then arrange a pickup.