

November in My Garden 11, 2022

November is the month that can offer surprises. My tomatoes were still trying to produce in October, thanks to late month warm weather. So I waited until the end of October to plant seedlings of snow peas, kale, spinach, Chinese cabbage, and Swiss chard, since the soil temperature did not drop below 50 degrees. I should have winter vegetables until spring, especially since I put my sewing skills to work, making protection from squirrels and leaf miners. I bought bridal veiling, hemmed it all around to fit each vegetable plot, and attached Velcro to the veil and the wooden sides. I can still find Swiss chard, mustard greens, and kale seedlings at Summer Winds or OSH, and I like to mix them into a porch container. I keep trimming the leaves from the outside of the plants to have stir fry additions all winter. I made green tomato chutney from the tomatoes that never ripened.

This is also a good time to perk up succulents by pruning and using the cuttings to start new plants. I cut a rosette from a succulent plant, set it aside for a few days to let the cut end dry out, and then start new plants using a succulent mix. At this time, my succulents are outlasting my kitchen appliances. So, at my side door, I have a lineup of broken irons, toasters, coffee pots, tea kettles that have been turned into containers for succulents.

And now I am getting ready for winter. First of all, due to the drought, I turned off the sprinklers watering my lawn, to sacrifice my lawn and save more valuable plants like Azaleas, Meyer Lemons, Camellias. Also, I added an extra layer of compost and mulch to hold in the moisture throughout the garden, keeping an eye out for dryness around my plants. I first wet the ground and put down a new layer of compost to hold in moisture, reduce evaporation, slow weed growth, and entice earthworms. Am I repeating myself? Mulch, mulch, mulch! For acid-loving plants, pine needles or peat moss is the best mulch. I cut down late-summer-flowering Clematis almost to soil level. I leave two inches of stem so I can protect Clematis from vigorous cleanup. Mine are labeled so I know where they are. Also, I cut down Dahlia stalks to 6" above ground to let them dry up. I do remember that hollow stalks are vulnerable to rain. I also finished feeding all spring bulbs. I head off the snails and slugs with modest amounts of Super Sluggo, their favorite food. They rarely return for seconds. If my fruit trees did not get pruned in October, I do that task now before their leaves drop. After their leaves drop, I spray peach and nectarine trees, the branches, stems, and trunk, with lime sulfur, an organic fungicide, to control peach leaf curl, but I only spray when 3 days of dry weather are guaranteed. I stop feeding house plants by Thanksgiving, and then I give them some tender, loving care, like fresh soil and light fertilizer, around Valentine's Day.

I really like to try forcing paper whites. I crowd the bulbs together, pointed end up, on a bed of pea gravel in a shallow glass dish, 3-4 inches deep. I add another layer of gravel to fill in any gaps and then cover the bulbs up to their shoulders. I 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 the bulb to rot. I store the container in low light and keep the bulbs cool, at about 65 degrees F. My basement works well for this operation. I check the bulbs daily to see if they need more water. When I see roots developing, I move the container to a bright window, but I don't let them get too warm or they'll grow leggy. Once the

plants flower, they will last longer if I move them out of direct sunlight. If they start drooping, I give them a little nip: I replace the water with 14 parts water to one part rubbing alcohol!! I use the alcohol solution for future watering. Happy Gardening from Vicki Sullivan