



**“Solutions for Your Life”**

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Lawn & Garden | Commercial Horticulture | Families & Consumers | Florida Yards & Neighborhoods | 4-H Youth Development | Urban Sustainability

## Things To Do in the Landscape

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It is easy to forget that cold weather may soon be just around the corner and we might not be prepared. Plan ahead for what protection measures you will take in your landscape in case cold weather comes.

Plants which require protection in home landscapes are copperleaf, banana, papaya, poinsettia, hibiscus, ixora, dwarf schefflera, carissa, philodendron, croton, bougainvillea, allamanda, seagrape, bromeliads, tropical fruit trees or any other tropical or semi-tropical plant you may have planted.

Covers offer the most practical cold protection for prized plants. Old sheets, blankets, boxes, newspaper or plastic can be used for covers. When using plastic, build a frame over the plant so that the plastic does not touch the plant's foliage. Any covering should be sealed to the ground. This will trap heat rising from the ground and keep the interior three to four degrees warmer than the outside air. Apply the cover late in the afternoon before the temperature starts to drop. Plastic covers should be removed the next morning after the temperature is above freezing but before the sun's rays become warm enough to cook your plants. Cloth or paper coverings can remain over plants for two or three days if temperature is expected to go below freezing each night. Additional information can be obtained by accessing the University of Florida/IFAS publication *Cold Protection of Ornamental Plants* on the Internet at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG025>.

### **Holiday plants**

If your holiday **Poinsettia** comes in a container wrapped in a foil outer cover, be sure to remove it or punch holes in the bottom to allow excess water to drain. Keep the soil around your poinsettia slightly moist, but not soggy and place the plant in a bright window out of direct sunlight.

There are two types of flowering **holiday cactus**, the Christmas cactus and the Easter cactus. The Christmas cactus, *Zygocactus truncates*, usually flowers from Thanksgiving to Christmas and its leaves have pointed lobes. The Easter cactus, *Schlumbergera bridgessii*, has wider leaves,

which are rounded. It usually flowers from Christmas to Easter. Allow soil to dry out between watering and keep the plant in bright light while in bloom. These are long-lived plants and can be kept outside in the shade during most of the year. They do need to be protected from frost and freezing temperatures.

**Kalanchoe**, a winter blooming succulent, has become popular as a holiday plant. The showy flowers are in terminal clusters and last for several weeks. Flower colors are yellow, pink, red, and various shades of orange. Since this is a succulent plant, let the soil dry out between watering.

## In the Landscape

**Winter and spring annuals** are available at local garden centers. Pansies, calendulas, petunias, sweet alyssum, snapdragons and pinks are a few nice ones to use as bedding plants or in baskets and containers. All of these will survive frosts or freezes and keep on blooming. Others annuals that are a bit more sensitive to frost, but good to plant now are impatiens, geranium, and begonias. To keep them blooming into spring, provide a light application of 5-8-8, 6-10-10 or other comparable slow release fertilizer every two months.

Growth of **lawn grasses** has slowed as the weather cools and the days become short. Mowing and watering can be reduced to about every two weeks until the weather warms in the spring. Lawns do not need to be fertilized during the winter months.

Petal blight and bud blast are problems when growing **camellias** in our area. Now is the time to combat these problems by clearing off old mulch and any debris under the plants and spraying the plants with a fungicide labeled for use on camellias. Put down a fresh layer of mulch about two inches deep. When flowers start to open, pick off any that look diseased and don't allow old flowers to fall to the ground. In addition, remove flowers as soon as they fade.

## Veggie Gardens

Remember to side dress **vegetable gardens** with fertilizer every three to four weeks. Use about one pound of 8-8-8 per 100 square feet. Apply along sides or between rows about six to eight inches away from the plant stems. Remember to water well after applying fertilizer.

Watch for late blight on your **Tomatoes**. Look for brown, water-soaked areas on the fruit and yellowing lower leaves that eventually turn brown. Late blight is a problem when there is high humidity and the temperature is between 60 to 70 degrees F. Control this disease at first sign of symptoms by spraying the entire plant with a fungicide labeled for late blight. Always carefully follow the label directions.

Texas Grano is an excellent **bulbing onion** to plant in our area during the winter gardening season. They require fertile, moist soil and take about 168 days to mature. The Texas Grano has pure white flesh, a mild flavor and sweet taste. It is also resistant to pink rot which can destroy the developing onion bulb.

## Herbs

This is an excellent time to plant several different varieties of herbs. Even if you don't have space, herbs can be grown in containers. Some even do well indoors on a sunny window sill. Some cool

season herbs are sage, dill, cilantro, anise, sweet marjoram, thyme, lavender, rosemary, sweet fennel, and chives. Herbs do best in well drained soil with a minimum of fertilizer.

## **Citrus**

Citrus fruit **must** be fully ripe when harvested since the sweetening process stops once the fruit is picked. Many varieties of citrus have a long season in which they can be left on the tree and gathered for use as needed. There is a time however, when the tree stops caring for the fruit and it starts to dry out.

### **[For Extension events information / registration](#)**

[www.pinellascounty.org/events](http://www.pinellascounty.org/events) or call (727) 582-2100

*Pinellas County Extension is part of a nationwide network of land grant universities providing unbiased, research-based information to America's citizens. In our state, Extension's land grant link is the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). Pinellas County Extension serves as a bridge between the research labs of the university and the local community by providing educational opportunities for adults and youth.*