



“Solutions for Your Life”

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Things To Do in the Landscape

January 2010



January can be one of our coldest months. Healthy plants can withstand **cold temperatures** much better than those that are neglected. Remember to water deeply during dry spells. Be careful to follow the watering restrictions. By mulching tender plants you can help trap the heat in the soil. When there is a predicted frost, cover plants with sheets, blankets, newspapers, cardboard boxes or any other suitable materials. This covering should not be left on more than two or three days even if you have to re-cover them later. If you use plastic, it must be removed the next morning.

You can't do much to protect tropical plants in the landscape from being damaged or killed by a **hard freeze**. Covering only protects against frost and possibly a light freeze. Some people erect tall, plastic covered structures and hang light bulbs in an attempt to keep the area warm. Potted plants can be moved indoors, to a garage or shed for temporary protection. After potted plants are moved back out be sure to check the soil for dryness.

You may be tempted to **prune** cold damaged plants, but severe pruning on woody plants should be delayed until new growth appears in the spring. Herbaceous plants (those with green stems) that tend to rot after a freeze can be cut back to the ground to try and save the root system.

Watch for anthracnose on **mango** blooms this month. This disease appears as small, black, sunken areas on the flower spike. If left unchecked, it can kill the flowers, preventing the development of fruit. Begin treatment with copper fungicide when the bloom spikes first appear and continue spraying at weekly intervals until the fruit is fully formed, then spray monthly until June or July.

Seeds from **papaya** can be started indoors this month. Clean the pulp off each seed and plant about ¼ inch deep in a container of potting soil. Fresh seeds usually germinate in ten to fifteen days. Under ideal growing conditions, fruit should be produced in eight to ten months. Seedlings planted in early March should produce edible fruit by November.

There is still time to grow some of your own **vegetables**. Have your soil pH tested and make any necessary adjustments. The pH range for growing vegetables in sandy soil is from 5.8 to 6.8. Consult the UF/IFAS Extension *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* for the vegetables that can be planted this month. Access it on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>.

Night dampness brings out **snails and slugs**. Spread bait near tender plants, especially seedlings, and in moist, shady spots where creatures hide during the day. Read the label for instructions before using bait around vegetables and pets as some are poisonous. An alternative to baits is diatomaceous earth. This powder contains tiny sharp projectiles that will puncture the snails and slugs. Sprinkle lightly around plants. This will not harm beneficial insects or pets. Another alternative is Iron Phosphate bait which also has the advantage of being safe for use around domestic animals and wildlife.

Roses should be pruned once each year during January or February in our area. This major yearly pruning consists of removing some healthy growth and all of the dead, injured, diseased, or unsightly branches. Leave at least half the length of each main cane that is one to three years old. The rose bush should bloom again in eight to nine weeks. Pruning cuts should be made just above an outward facing dormant bud, and Consulting Rosarian's recommend covering cut surfaces larger than a pencil with white glue. When removing an entire branch, make a smooth cut at the trunk and paint with glue. Be sure to clean up clippings from around your plants after pruning to help prevent the spread of disease. Apply a layer of fresh mulch keeping it 2-3 inches away from the base of the plant.

Houseplants must have light to live. It is important to find out about the light needs for your particular plant. In general, foliage plants require less light than flowering plants. Plants not receiving sufficient light may become tall and weak-looking with pale leaves which may then drop off. Flowers may also fail to form if it is a flowering plant.

Is Spanish moss helpful or harmful? Although often accused of being a parasite, Spanish moss is really a native bromeliad epiphyte, receiving water and nutrients from the air, dust, and rain. The only obvious threat it poses to trees is preventing air circulation through foliage, and limb breakage because of its weight when wet.

Bulbs are nice additions to the landscape and now is the time to plant. Some you may want to try are agapanthus, amaryllis, caladium, crinum lily, gloriosa lily, and zephyr lily. Work in a generous amount (twenty five pounds per one-hundred square feet) of organic matter such as compost, cow manure, sphagnum peat, or other types of peat moss. Bulbs planted in large masses produce the best color display. If you had Amaryllis in bloom for the holidays, these bulbs can be planted outside and will live and bloom for many years. For complete information on choosing, planting and caring for bulbs, access *Bulbs for Florida* on the Internet at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg029>.

Citrus spray schedule. January is often referred to as an optional month when spraying citrus trees. Several Citrus pests and nutritional deficiencies may need correcting before they cause extensive damage. Spray neutral copper for Citrus scab and a light horticultural oil for scales, whitefly, and mites. Micro-nutrients can be sprayed at the same time or added to the soil under the drip line of the tree. Micro-nutrients will be absorbed through the leaves and can correct the problem much faster than fertilizer added to the soil. Read and follow label directions for the correct amount to use. You can access the University of Florida/IFAS Extension publication: *Your Florida Dooryard Citrus Guide - Common Pests, Diseases, and Disorders of Dooryard Citrus* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS122>.

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