

# Gardeners' Checklist for January

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



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**PHOTO CREDIT: Margaret Canavan**

**Gardening is an easy activity to share with kids who are spending more time at home because of distance learning. Gardening offers endless learning and discovery opportunities for kids.**

One good thing about 2020 was that many more people have discovered the solace that comes from gardening. Experienced gardeners dived even deeper into their gardening adventures and tried new things. There's something so satisfying about planting a seed or transplant and then watching it grow. Successful gardeners learn that even gardening failures hold important lessons to be learned. I hope that your gardening endeavors in 2021 add a

bit of joy to your life, whether your garden is on a balcony or in a backyard.

The month of January is an ideal time to carry out many needed activities that will help ensure healthy and vigorous growing plants when the growing season starts this spring.

Home gardeners continue to harvest winter vegetables and enjoy cool-season flowers. Review the

following checklist for gardening activities to bring in the New Year.

- Many gardeners have inquired about the status of our annual Spring Plant Sale which is usually conducted in the Rodeo Arena at the Galveston County Fairgrounds. Due to COVID-19 issues, this year's spring plant sale will be conducted online on February 19 and February 20. Citrus and avocado trees, perennials, bulbs, tomatoes, sweet peppers, lettuce and potatoes will





be available. Check the Master Gardener website in early February for additional updates.

- Few shrubs or trees are best purchased and planted while they are in bloom, but camellias are one exception. These notable shrubs are in glorious bloom, and right now is the time to plant them into your landscape. Better yet, now also is a great time to purchase and plant camellias in containers. As beautiful as they are in the ground, camellias adapt happily to life in containers and are particularly impressive when grown that way.

- Continue to select and plant ornamental trees and shrubs to fill landscape needs. Always plan ahead before planting. Remember that like little puppies, ornamental trees and shrubs grow up. In the case of some trees, they can get large so be prudent about what you plant below electrical and telephone lines. The tree-and the homeowner-will ultimately lose in such standoffs.

- Keep the lawn free of heavy leaf buildup to prevent smothering the grass. A few leaves won't harm the lawn but they should not be allowed to completely cover the lawn, especially if they become heavily packed and stay wet for long periods.

- Select and order gladiolus corms for February and March planting. Planting at two-week intervals will prolong the flowering period.

Choose some of the newer varieties for a vivid color display.

- Apply dormant oil sprays to control scale and other hard-to-manage insect pests on landscape trees and shrubs. Read and follow all directions provided by the manufacturer.

- Apply a light application of a nitrogen fertilizer (such as 21-0-0) to established beds of winter flowering annuals (pansy, calendula, snapdragon, etc.).

- We know that, at some point, it will likely get cold enough this winter that tropical plants in our landscapes will need protection. Plan for it now by deciding what tender plants you will choose to protect and what plants will be left to fend for themselves. Make sure you have enough materials on hand to protect those plants you will cover.

Suitable materials include plastic, fabric sheets, blankets, tarps and cardboard boxes to name a few. Each plant to be protected needs to have a covering large enough to extend to the ground. It also helps to have stakes available to drive into the ground around plants to help support the coverings and bricks to weight down the bottom edges of the covering.

- To be on the safe side, always store liquid pesticides in a locked cabinet in a location where they will not freeze. Some garden pesticides have a water base and may

freeze if stored in an unheated shed during prolonged periods of below freezing temperatures. If the liquid freezes, the container may be damaged, allowing the material to leak out when temperatures warm.

- As children are spending more time at home with home schooling and distance learning, parents are looking for ways to get them outside and keep them busy. In addition to the many health benefits of being outside, outdoor play and being involved in gardening offers endless learning opportunities for kids.

