

## You Can Still Garden in January

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If you have lived in Florida for a few years, you are no stranger to odd weather patterns during the winter. Sometimes it feels like Mother Nature just can't make up her mind. Is it going to be cold or warm or somewhere in between? Since we haven't had a freeze yet, many flowers are still in bloom when they normally wouldn't be creating a beautiful display in the landscape. Chilly or not, there are many tasks that can be done in the garden during January.



There are a variety of plants that can be planted this month. You can plant some cool-season annuals such as pansies, violas, petunias, and snapdragons in your beds or containers to bring in additional color to your landscape. Bulbs such as crinum, agapanthus, and gloriosa lily can also be planted now. They will provide beautiful flowers in the summer. Cover them with a good layer of mulch to protect them from any upcoming cold weather.

January is a great time to select and plant camellias, which are currently in bloom. This will allow their roots to become established before the heat of summer. The Gainesville Camellia Society will hold their 40th annual Camellia Flower Show on January 9-10 at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens in Gainesville. View the gorgeous cut flower blooms which will be on display starting at 1pm until 5pm on January 9th and January 10th from 9am to 4pm. The Gainesville Camellia Society will also have a camellia plant sale at the show. You can buy plants from 9am to 5pm each day, so come early for the best selection. Camellias come in a variety of colors and forms.

If you got a raised-bed garden box for Christmas, feel free to break it open and get started. You can plant a variety of cool-season crops right now including beets, cabbage, turnips, lettuce, and broccoli.

For deciduous fruit, such as apples, blueberries, figs, peaches, pecans, and others, now is the time to plant them so that their roots have time to develop before the warm, dry spring. You can also prune and fertilize existing trees.

Have your plan ready for protecting tender plants to minimize cold damage for when that freeze comes. Locate your covers that you would use and identify which plants need to be protected. If you are going to use plastic, make sure that it does not touch the plant. Watering landscape plants before the freeze can help protect them. For citrus, you can mound soil around the base of the tree up to 2 feet.

For shrubs and trees, you can prune the non-spring flowering ones to improve the form. The third Friday in January is Arbor Day, so you can celebrate it by planting a tree in your yard or community. You may want to consider a hurricane-resistant tree, such as live oak, bald cypress, cabbage palm, or crapemyrtle. If you already have crapemyrtles in your yard, you can remove seed pods, crossing branches, and small twiggy growth to improve its appearance and form. Hard pruning, or crape “murder” as some call it, is not required for the plant to bloom.

When it comes to pest control on trees and shrubs, it is best to apply horticultural oil while the plants are dormant to control scale. If you see any scale insects on your citrus, shrubs, camellias, and deciduous fruit trees, go ahead and give them a spray.

For more information on each of these topics, look at the North Florida Gardening Calendar, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep451>, which provides tips on what to do each month and links them to more details. You can also contact the Alachua County Master Gardener help desk at [mag@alachuacounty.us](mailto:mag@alachuacounty.us) or (352) 955-2402. Master Gardeners can also address your questions at the DIY potting up event for the grand opening of the new Lowes on Clark Butler Blvd in Gainesville from 10am-2pm on Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.