



Garden Tasks for January

by Thea Fiskin, Master Gardener

A New Year - time to start putting those resolutions and big plans into action! Start by planning your spring/summer veggie garden. Eat fresh artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, lettuce, peas, all spring and enjoy cool cucumbers, tasty peppers, unique squashes, and luscious tomatoes in the summer. Dreary, foggy days are the perfect time to plan on paper the garden of your dreams. On the beautiful sunny days of winter go outside and start preparing the vegetable site. Veggie gardens come in all sizes... start small and work your way up. Don't forget to start those seeds indoors; the last freeze is just about 10-12 weeks away.

What to plant:

Bareroot fruit trees - It's time to go shopping! Apples, apricots, cherries, figs, pears, plums take your pick. Local nurseries carry varieties suitable to our climate. Ask about pollination requirements; not all fruit trees are self-fertile and some will require a cross pollinator. For example an elephant heart plum requires another variety plum such as Santa Rosa; Cherries with the exception of Stella require another compatible cherry to bear fruit. Notice the chill hours required, our winter averages 800 chilling hours. Bareroot is the way to go!

Bareroot roses - This is the perfect time to add roses to your garden. All varieties, hybrid teas, floribundas, climbers, miniatures and shrubs, are available.

Bareroot berries and grapes- Plant grape vines and cane boysenberries, blackberries and raspberries, blueberries and strawberries.

Vegetables - Asparagus crowns, artichokes, horseradish, lettuce, peas, and rhubarb can be planted now. Hold off planting new citrus or sub-tropicals because of the potential for frost damage. Better to wait until spring.

Garden Chores:

Dormant sprays - Time to spray roses and deciduous flowering and fruit trees with horticultural oil to smother overwintering insects like spider mites, scales, mealy bugs, and peach twig borers. Spray the branches, crotches, trunk, and ground beneath the tree's drip line. Hold off spraying if rain is forecast, or if the temperature is below 45°F, and never spray oil on walnut trees. If you didn't spray your peach and nectarine trees for peach leaf curl in November or December spray trunk, branches and ground underneath tree with a copper-based or a synthetic fungicide.

Lawns - Mow cool season grass lawns such as fescue at 1.5-2 inches (slightly shorter than in summer) to reduce disease problems. Try not to mow when grass is wet or frozen to avoid

compaction. Start thinking about controlling summer weeds (Already? Yes!). If your flowerbeds were plagued with spurge and your lawn with crabgrass last summer, then apply a preemergence herbicide to kill seeds as they are germinating. For best results apply uniformly over the entire area late this month, I usually do it just before Super Bowl Sunday.

Prune- Just about everything needs pruning now. Dormant deciduous plants such as fruit trees, roses, grapes, and cane berries should be pruned after leaf drop and before buds swell; the worst time to prune is right after the leaves emerge in spring. Do not prune apricots until summer. Wait to prune spring flowering plants like forsythia, lilacs, quince, until after they finish blooming.

Pruning tips - Remove all broken, diseased, or crossing branches first. Two basic cutting techniques are used in general pruning. Thinning cuts remove entire branches, resulting in a more natural look. Heading cuts shorten branches and should only be used on small branches. Heading stimulates several weak branches to vigorously sprout, creating an unnatural look. Begin pruning with thinning cuts to open up the tree. Use heading cuts judiciously to shorten overlong branches. Make sure to cut back to an outward facing bud to direct new growth away from the interior of the tree. Prune from the bottom up and from the inside of the plant to the outside. Use these same techniques on deciduous shrubs for the most natural effect.

Upcoming Rose Pruning Demonstrations: Bring your pruning shears and gloves for a free rose pruning demonstration by the Tulare-Kings Master Gardeners. Come learn more about roses, pest management, tool care and general gardening information. All demonstrations are from 10 am to 2 pm.

January 19 - Tulare County Courthouse Roses in Visalia (Mooney Blvd and Burrel Ave)

January 21 - Old Grangeville Church near Hanford (on Hackett St, 14th St & Grangeville Blvd)

January 26 - Ralph Moore Rose Garden in Visalia (W. Main St and Hall St)

January 3, 2013