# MONTHLY GARDEN CHORES—DECEMBER

General garden care:

* Adjust irrigation. December rains can be unpredictable. Turn off irrigation if precipitation has been plentiful. If not, reduce time and frequency of irrigation to the minimum amount needed to keep plants alive.
* Replenish mulch in garden beds to conserve moisture and protect the soil from freezing.
* Use rainy days to clean, sharpen and lubricate garden tools; store them in dry conditions until ready to use.

Plant:

* Shop for bare-root roses and trees for the best selection.
* Pre-chill tulips and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator before planting them in the ground.
* Camellias are blooming. Now is a good time to select the varieties and flower colors you prefer.
* Conifers suitable for living Christmas trees are available in most nurseries. Choices include Colorado blue spruce, deodar cedar, Douglas fir, pines and redwood.

Fruit trees:

* Spray deciduous fruit trees after they’ve lost all their leaves. Apply dormant spray to smother overwintering insect eggs and pests, such as aphids, mites and scale.
* Spray peach and nectarine trees with fungicide for peach leaf curl. Carefully follow label instructions for application rate and procedures.
* Prune deciduous fruit trees. Remove dying, diseased or injured wood. Take out crossed or crowded branches.
* Clean under trees. Rake up leaves and fallen fruit. Dispose of in your green waste to prevent the spread of pests and disease.
* Protect young citrus trees from frost. They’re more susceptible to damage than older, established trees. Drape trees with burlap; if possible, keep fabric from touching leaves or fruit.

Vegetables and herbs:

* Begin harvesting winter vegetables. Pick Brussels sprouts from the bottom first. Cut heads from broccoli and allow side stalks to produce extra sprouts.
* Artichokes, rhubarb and other bare-root vegetables are available in nurseries and can be planted now through early spring.

References:

UC ANR Publication 7426, Peach Leaf Curl

UC ANR Publication 8057, Fruit Trees: Training and Pruning Deciduous Trees

UC ANR Publication 8100, Frost Protection for Citrus and Other Subtropicals