

## It Rained. Now's The Time For Winter Gardening

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Dec. 22, 2018

**Q:** What should I be doing in my yard this time of year?

**A:** Now that we're finally getting rain and most of the leaves have dropped, you can stop raking leaves and start thinking about what you would like to grow next year.

This is the time to order seeds from catalogs for the best selection. For seed that is locally grown and adapted to our climate, check out the display of Redwood Organic Seeds at Wyntour Nursery and Holiday Markets. For other locations or to order direct, go to their website at <https://www.redwoodseeds.net/pages/seeds>.

Get ready to start tomato and pepper seeds indoors around mid-February and other warm weather vegetable seeds in March. They'll be ready to set out in April or later, after frost danger has passed.



Tomato seedlings in late winter. (Photo: TRIBUNE file PHOTOS/RION SANDERS)

This is the time of year to plant new trees and shrubs. Go bare root if you can. I hear the roses are in at Wyntour Gardens and most nurseries will have bare root trees, and shrubs available soon after the first of the year.

Cut back branches and stalks from ornamentals that have frozen back. Run the mower over the removed stalks and add them to your compost.

Turn your compost pile once a month to help it work faster. In the heavy rains it's a good practice to keep it covered with a tarp so it doesn't become waterlogged.

Use finished compost to enrich your soil. Our hot summers bake organic matter out of the soil quickly, and you need to replace it at least twice a year. By adding compost, you're providing food for, and encouraging growth of, the many soil organisms that will renew your soil for spring. This is also a great time to get any weed problems under control, then mulch to keep them out. Garden bed can be covered with cardboard or old carpet to keep weeds out until you are ready to plant.

Prune deciduous trees and shrubs, especially fruit trees, while they're dormant. Before pruning make sure to review the type of wood required for each to fruit or flower so that you don't prune off wood that will produce the fruit or flowers in Spring. If pruning fruit trees, check the Home Orchard websites for the dos and don'ts of pruning each type of tree at [http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/Fruits\\_&\\_Nuts/](http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/Fruits_&_Nuts/). For pruning information on ornamentals I like to reference the American Horticultural Society's book on pruning and training.

Dormant-spray fruit trees with horticultural oil and fixed copper to help control overwintering insects, peach leaf curl and fire blight on apples and pears. Repeat this process twice for best results. Coverage in February and even March is particularly important if tree has not budded out with flowers. Pruning and dormant spray activities are best done when there will be a week of dry weather. This prevents disease and allows the dormant spray to work better.

Clean and oil your hand tools after pruning or other gardening activities and maintain power tools so they'll be ready when you need them.

Remember to water plants if we get a long dry spell in January, especially citrus and young trees. One of the main reasons we lose plants in the winter is not because they freeze, but because the soil dries out.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*