



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Helpful Garden Tips for November 2018 (November 3, 2018)

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November is a beautiful month in our Central Valley and foothill gardens. We're finishing up planting and other garden jobs, usually welcoming rain and enjoying autumn colors. It can also be a month that brings frost, so early in the month we need to prepare for it by wrapping pipes, covering frost sensitive plants with row-cover cloth or moving tender plants into the house or onto the patio or at least under eaves or under a large tree.

PLANTING: November is my favorite month to plant California native and other climate-right plants. Once the soil has been saturated by the first rains of the season and the air is cool and moist, the plants experience little shock being transplanted. This is especially true in the well-mulched garden. Frost sensitive plants, like those from Baja California, the Channel Islands and some low-desert areas, should be protected through winter, or wait until spring to plant.

November is an ideal month for planting spring bulbs like daffodils and narcissus. Bulbs can be a great way to provide early color and when planted in masses make a big welcoming show. Nurseries usually have a large number of bulbs available. Purchase only bulbs that are firm and do not show any signs of mold. Tulips and Hyacinths will require pre-cooling for 6 weeks before they are planted. A good way to pre-cool is to place them in the refrigerator. Use the vegetable/fruit drawer, but make sure there isn't any fruit near the bulbs. Fruits and vegetables can cause the bulbs to sprout prematurely.

Plant your bulbs where they will get a full day of sunshine. A general rule to follow when planting is to place the larger bulbs deeper. In most cases, you should plant the bulb three times deeper than its height. Usually the pointed end of the bulb is placed up when planting. If you can't tell which end is up, plant on side, the plant will rise to the sun. Add a handful of bulb fertilizer to the base of the planting holes and mix it into the soil. All spring bulbs should be planted by Thanksgiving at the very latest. Here are some specific tips about the different types of bulbs:

- Anenomes have little wrinkly tubers that resemble raisins. Soak the tubers in water for a couple of hours before you plant them 4-5" deep.
- Daffodils are planted about 8" deep, unless they are miniatures. Miniatures should be planted 4" deep. Daffodils will multiply every year, so don't plant them to close together. If you have a gopher problem, these are the bulbs to plant.
- Grape Hyacinths have lovely blue, purple or white blooms. These bulbs will also multiply every year. Plant about 4-6" deep.



- Hyacinth bulbs must be pre-cooled, otherwise they will have short stubby stems and smaller flowers. These are treated as annuals and are pulled out and discarded after their bloom time.
- Ranunculus tubers look like dried miniature bunches of bananas. Soak the tubers in water for a couple of hours before planting. Place in the hole with the little pointy ends down, approximately 2" deep.
- Tulips: Plant 6"-8" deep. Tulips are also treated as annuals in our area, as they rarely survive the summer. Pull out and discard them after they have bloomed.

You can still plant winter vegetables in November, including greens, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, especially early in the month when the soil is still warm. I've successfully planted garlic and onions late in November, harvesting them in late May or June the following year.

It is best to transplant established shrubs, trees and perennials when they go dormant or drop their leaves, usually towards the end of the month or in winter. Dig them up carefully, and take as much of the root system as you can. Be sure to plant at the same ground level, and water and mulch well. If you plant them too deep, it will kill the plant.

MAINTAINING: After the leaves fall, begin pruning shrubs and trees, not only to shape them, but to prevent storm damage. A tree without gaps in the leaf canopy may have broken branches as a result of the wind. Open up spaces by removing a few branches from the trunk with thinning cuts. You should never top landscape trees. Our Master Gardener website has more complete instructions and illustrations on pruning trees.

Fall and winter blooming plants and vegetables can be fertilized. Do not fertilize California native plants, avocado, citrus, palms or other frost sensitive plants.

If your peach or nectarine tree had deformed leaves during the summer, it probably had "peach leaf curl". This is a fungal disease that affects fruiting, and if severe, it can cause the tree to die. To control peach leaf curl:

- Rake leaves when they fall. Remove any mummies and discard. Do not add these to your compost pile.
- Spray trunk, branches and the ground underneath the tree with a copper-based fungicide or a Bordeaux mixture (a slurry made of hydrated lime and copper sulfate). You can also use a synthetic fungicide. Products need to have 50 percent copper to be truly effective.
- One application is usually sufficient; however, if we have a wet winter, then spray again before the flower buds swell in the spring.

CONSERVING: Reduce watering due to cooler temperatures and shorter days. You may only need to water once a week, if at all. It is important that you follow your city's water regulations. If you have non-native milkweed, usually with orange or yellow flowers, make sure the flowers are pruned off to encourage Monarchs to migrate. The cold of winter will kill them if they stick around. You can check and refill bird feeders with fresh seed and check after rainstorms to make sure the seed isn't moldy. Consider leaving some seed stalks on some of your grasses and perennials for birds to forage this winter.