

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN IN DECEMBER



Season's Greetings

The Ornamental Garden

Prepare soil, remove any weeds and plant out summer and autumn annuals early this month, and apply mulch.

Water new plantings as necessary.

Continue to deadhead roses. Support new water shoots on roses with stakes and ties. Watch for sucker growth from below the graft and always remove.

Dahlias can still be planted, including cutting-grown plants.

Dianthus can be layered or cuttings taken at any time during the growing season, usually late summer to early autumn.

Look for autumn bulbs such as colchicum, sternbergia, lycoris and nerines for planting in the coming two months.

Finish pruning spring-flowering shrubs and evergreens.

Deadhead annuals and perennials to prolong flowering.

The Kitchen Garden

Continue to make regular sowings of autumn-maturing vegetables. Thin earlier sowings and control weeds.

Make a late planting of tomatoes and capsicums just before Christmas in the warmest spot for a good late crop.

Begin to harvest crops as soon as they are of usable size.

Sow more seeds of beans, beetroot, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, cucumber, leek, parsley, potato, pumpkin, radish, silver beet, sweet corn, zucchinis and parsnip (to mid-December).

Make first sowings of winter vegetables in seed boxes. Only sow enough for your needs and so save space and water.

Keep watering fruit trees. Netting will prevent bird damage to stone fruit. Check for insect infestations and act to protect your crop.

General Maintenance

This month will see the first touch of really hot weather.

Mow lawns regularly at a high setting. If you are going away, arrange for someone to mow the lawn for you.

When watering the lawn, apply Saturaid or a similar product to make the best use of your water. Mulch all those areas not already covered and keep soil lightly aerated under the mulch to help water penetrate.

Water wisely, preferably when it's cooler. Adjust timers on automatic systems.

Plants are an unforgettable gift but a pair of good quality secateurs will give years of service. *The Canberra Gardener* is also a great gift for anyone wishing to create or maintain a garden in a cold climate.
