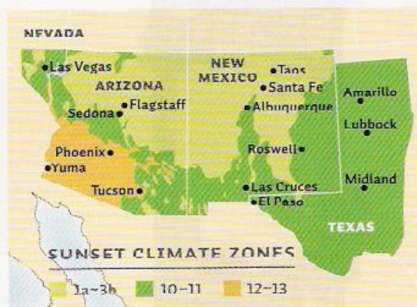


What to do in your garden January



Planting

Bare-root fruit trees Sunset climate zones 11–13: Plant apples, apricots, peaches, and plums. Choose low-chill varieties, including ‘Anna’, ‘Dorsett Golden’, or ‘Ein Shemer’ apples; ‘Blenheim’, ‘Gold Kist’, or ‘KaLy’ apricots; ‘Donanza II’, ‘Desertgold’, or ‘Flordaprince’ peaches; or ‘Beauty’ or ‘Santa Rosa’ plums.

Bare-root roses Zones 11–13: Good choices from the Texas A&M Earth Kind rose program include ‘Belinda’s Dream’, ‘Caldwell Pink’, ‘Carefree Beauty’, ‘Mutabilis’, ‘Sea Foam’, and ‘Spice’. These varieties were selected for their superior performance in hot climates and alkaline soil without excessive amounts of water or fertilizer.

Big bear grasses Zones 10–13: These large, brassy ponytail palm relatives are becoming popular accent plants in desert gardens. Blue nolina (*Nolina nelsoni*) and tree bear grass (*N. matapensis*) eventually form a thick trunk with a tussle of grasslike leaves at the top. Blue nolina occasionally shoots up an impressive plume of chartreuse flowers. Look for them at nurseries that sell native plants.

Herbs Zones 11–13: Sow seeds of cilantro, dill, epazote, fennel, and parsley in moist soil, then sprinkle the soil with water after sowing. Water regularly.

Peppers and tomatoes Zones 12–13: Sow seeds of heirloom peppers such as ‘Ancho San Luis’, a wide, dark green poblano type that’s medium-hot, or candy-sweet ‘Red

Cheese’. For tomatoes, consider ruffled ‘Pink Accordion’, a large, sweet heirloom perfect for stuffing, or ‘White Currant’, with tiny, cream-colored, intensely sweet fruit. Seeds are available from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (www.rareseeds.com or 417/924-8917).

Veggies Zones 11–13: Set out transplants of cabbage, lettuce, and Swiss chard.

Maintenance

Fertilize bearded iris Zones 11–13: Spread an all-purpose bulb fertilizer around plants, scratching it in with a rake or hand cultivator; water thoroughly toward the end of the month.

Protect plants from cold Most plants withstand cold better if they’re well irrigated before a frost (except succulents, which can suffer damage if cells are full of water). Keep an eye on the weather report, and water deeply when a frost is forecast. Move tender cactus and succulents into a protected area, such as under an overhang. To protect citrus, place tall poles or stakes around trees and drape with burlap or a frost blanket (available at most nurseries). Spread a row cover or frost blanket over lettuce and other cool-season crops.

Prune roses Zones 10–13: For floribundas and hybrid teas, choose five or six thick sturdy canes and prune them back to 18 inches, then remove weak, inward-facing, and crossing canes and branches. Dab cuts with household glue to discourage borer infestations.

Spray neem oil Because of its wide range of uses (insecticide, miticide, and fungicide) and low toxicity to humans and animals, neem oil is one of the best remedies to keep in your garden shed. For instance, you can control powdery mildew on penstemons and other susceptible perennials by spraying once a month during winter; it can also be sprayed on dormant trees to kill overwintering eggs, larvae, and adult insects. —SCOTT CALHOUN

Tip from the test garden

SOWING SEEDS IN CONTAINERS Many annuals, perennials, and edibles perform best when started from seed indoors. In a dry place, protected from cold or wet weather, they’ll get the light and warmth they need to grow and be ready for planting in the garden as soon as the weather warms.



FILL A 4-INCH nursery pot with seed-starting mix. Sow seeds, then cover with enough mix to put them at the depth specified on the packet. Set containers in a spot that gets bright light; keep soil moist.



WHEN SEEDLINGS develop their second set of true leaves, remove them from their original container. Gently tease apart, then plant in individual pots to mature before moving them outdoors.