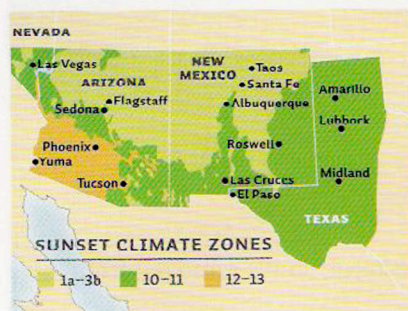


What to do in your garden

November



Planting

Acacias Sunset climate zones 12–13: November is an ideal planting month. Good small to medium-size acacia trees include catclaw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), Guajillo (*A. berlandieri*), sweet acacia (*A. farnesiana*), and twisted acacia (*A. schaffneri*). All have ferny leaves and produce sweetly scented, puffball-shaped flowers in spring that range in color from white to deep yellow. For a grove effect, combine acacias with mesquite trees. Look for plants at nurseries that carry a good selection of native plants.

Cool-season flowers Zones 10–13: Sow seeds of California poppies, clarkias, and nasturtiums. Set out transplants of ageratum, calendula, candytuft, coreopsis,

dianthus, foxglove, larkspur, lobelia, pansy, petunia, scabiosa, snapdragon, and sweet alyssum.

Fall color Zones 1a–3b, 10–12: Squawbush (*Rhus trilobata*) typically grows 5 to 6 feet tall, but now there's a new prostrate variety called 'Autumn Amber' that reaches only 2 to 3 feet tall yet still has the same lobed, flaming yellow to red leaves as its larger relative. Plants are available by mail from High Country Gardens (www.highcountrygardens.com or 800/925-9387). Zones 10–13: For milder climates, desert sumac (*Rhus microphylla*) makes a dense, 8-foot-tall hedge whose feathery divided leaves turn red in fall, and 15-foot-tall Mexican buckeye (*Ungnadia speciosa*) has compound leaves that turn brilliant yellow, making the plant a

good backdrop for smaller evergreen shrubs (pink flowers emerge before the leaves in spring). Look for both plants at local nurseries.

Native spring bloomers Zones 10–13: Through midmonth, set out spring-blooming plants such as autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*), blackfoot daisy (*Melampodium leucanthum*), brittlebush, globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), Mexican evening primrose, paper daisy, peristemon, and verbena.

Spiky accents Cold-hardy yuccas can be planted throughout the month. Try banana yucca, beaked yucca (*Yucca rostrata*), blue yucca, and our lord's candle.

Vegetables Zones 10–13: Sow seeds of beets, carrots, fava beans, kale, leeks, lettuce, parsnips, peas, radishes, rutabagas, salad greens, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips. Set out transplants of asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower. Water regularly to keep the soil moist but not soggy.

Maintenance

Adjust irrigation systems As temperatures begin to cool after midmonth, increase the number of days between irrigations, but maintain the length of each watering cycle.

Prepare for first frost Move cold-sensitive potted plants under porches, eaves, or tree canopies. Purchase commercial frost blankets to have on hand in case cold weather comes suddenly, or set aside old sheets and blankets (but don't use plastic sheeting). For frost-sensitive columnar cactus, place large polystyrene cups over their growing tips. Don't water cactus and succulents prior to forecasted frosts. Protect young citrus trees by wrapping their trunks with burlap or a similar material and draping the canopies with frost cloth. Cover with insulation any aboveground irrigation equipment (such as filters and backflow preventers for drip) that may be subject to freezing.

—SCOTT CALHOUN

Tip from the test garden

HOW TO PLANT A WINTER CONTAINER

A large pot brimming with plants can revitalize a patio in winter. Start with a small shrub or perennial from a 1-gallon nursery pot, and smaller plants from 4-inch pots. Good choices include primroses and violas.



STEP 1 Fill the pot with enough soil so that the top of the large plant's rootball sits about 2 inches below the pot's rim. Mix in a complete fertilizer according to package directions. Tamp soil lightly. Loosen coiled roots and position the large plant in the pot's center.



STEP 2 Add more soil around the large plant, then arrange the remaining plants, also to sit 2 inches below the pot's rim. Fill in remaining gaps with soil and water well. —JULIE CHAI